SEAN WILENTZ ON THE CONUNDRUM OF JEFFERSON

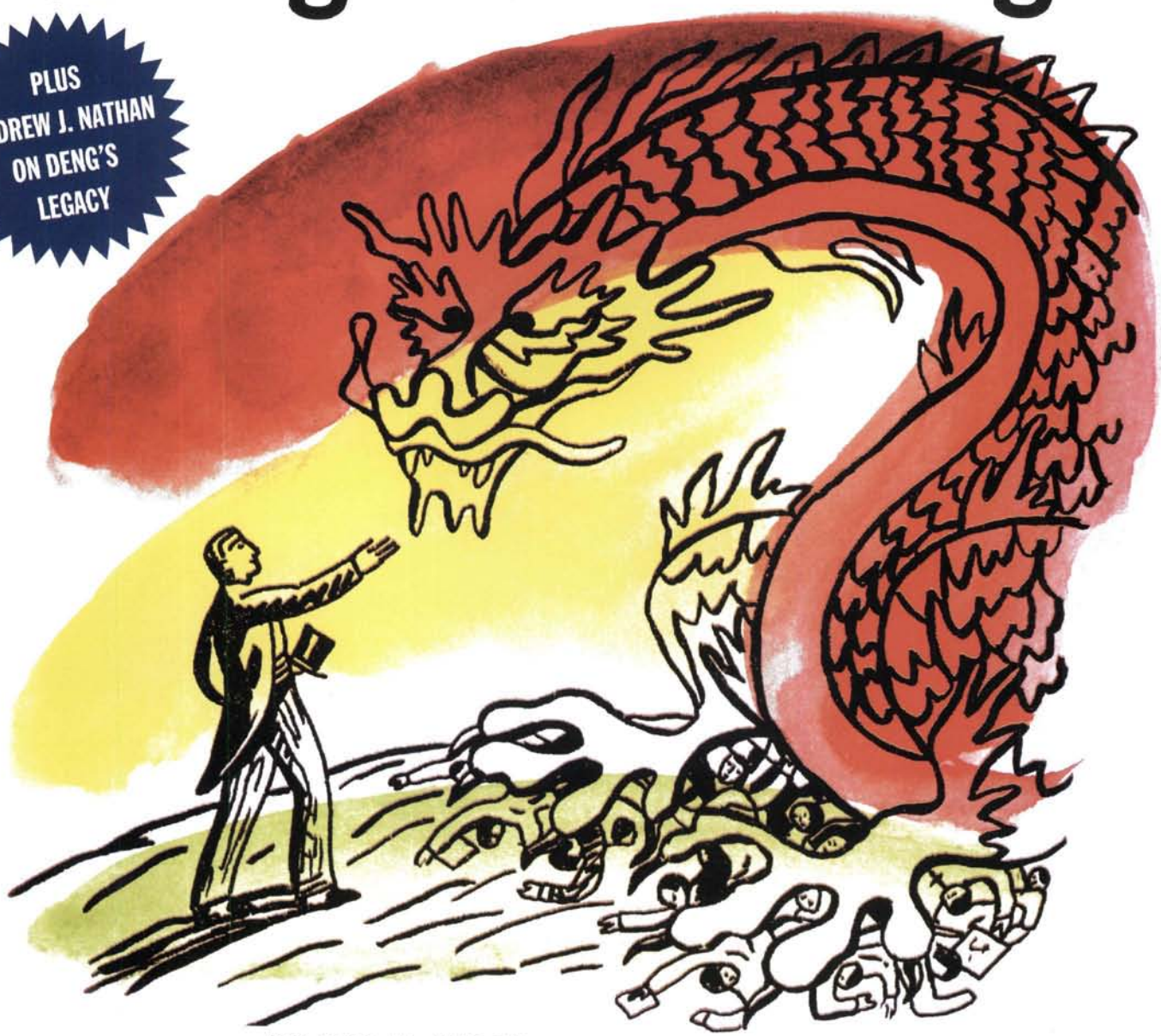
MARCH 10, 1997 • $2.95

THE NEW REPUBLIC

The Bipartisan Hit Job on Campaign Finance Reform—Hanna Rosin

Dancing With The Dragon

PLUS ANDREW J. NATHAN ON DENG'S LEGACY



HO NWRE 430 S00405
AMBASSADOR COLLEGE
ROY HAMMER LIB
PO BOX 111
BIG SANDY TX 75755-0111

#BXBKDML ******** 3-DIGIT 757
#75755ABA11IRY007# 012797

and Learned to Love China

RB • Stan Sesser

John B. Judis John Maggs • Peter Beinart

49140
0 787445 1

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

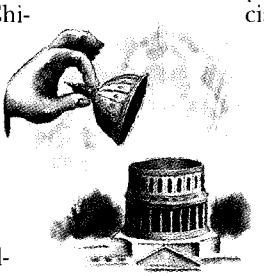
LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

TRB®
FROM WASHINGTON

CITIC-VIP

In an unfortunate effort to bolster the reputation of CIA Director-designate Anthony Lake, the White House, on February 14, released documents intended to show that Lake, as national security adviser, had run an honest and apolitical brokerage of advice to the president.

The helpful documents included an exchange of messages on April 7, 1995, between Melanie B. Darby and Robert L. Suettinger, both of the National Security Council. A problem had arisen, Darby wrote Suettinger. A few weeks before, the Democratic National Committee had requested that the White House invite several people to attend President Clinton's weekly radio address. "They did so," Darby wrote, "not knowing anything about them except that they were DNC contributors." Now, the visitors wanted copies of the photographs that had been taken of themselves with the president, and the president "wasn't sure we'd want photos of him with these people circulating around." Still, Darby wrote, "these people are major DNC contributors, and if we can give them the photos, the President's office would like to do so." She appended a list of the contributors in question, their titles and their occupations. There were seven people on the list. All except one of them were Chinese nationals. The one exception was the man who put the visit together, Johnny Chung, a Californian who seems to operate as a middleman between Asians and American politicians.



In his reply, Suettinger remarked on "the joys of balancing foreign policy considerations against domestic politics," and went on to say that, if it would motivate "continue[d] contributing to the DNC," it wouldn't do "any lasting damage to U.S. foreign policy" to give the fellows their delicatessen pictures. He added that, with one or two exceptions, the people that Darby had listed as major contributors to the DNC all "seemed to be bona fide (present or former) Chinese officials" who would "all hang the pictures on the wall and feel grateful for a memory."

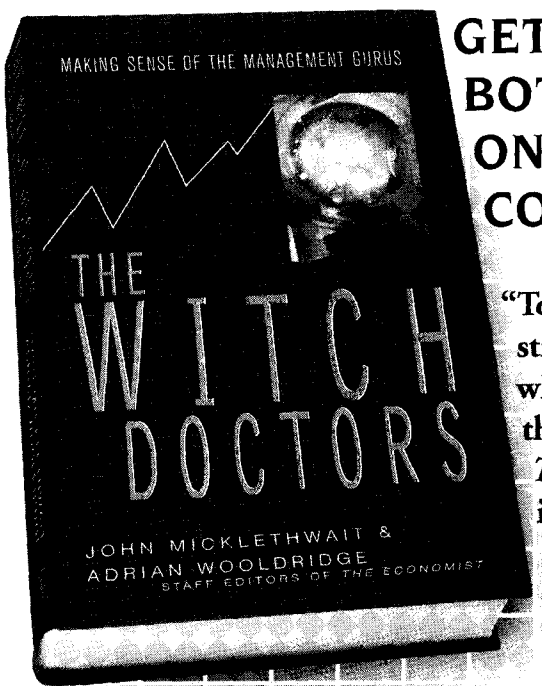
The press reported heavily on the Darby-Suettinger exchange, focusing on the fact that Suettinger had warned Darby about keeping company with "hustler" Johnny Chung. But the reports mostly missed the essential, and explosive, point of the exchange. What the Darby-Suettinger exchange tells us is that, according to two White House officials, a group of "major DNC contributors" were not only foreign nationals, but also "bona fide (present or former) Chinese officials," and that the idea that officials of the People's Republic of China were major contributors to the Democratic National Committee did not strike two members of Clinton's national security staff as a problem.

It is against the law for a foreign national to give money to an American political party. It is also against the law for a non-American representative of a foreign government to contribute to an American political party. And China, of course, is not just any foreign government. We are not talking Canada. We are talking the People's Republic of China, the last great communist power in the world, a totalitarian state where power is transferred not by elections but—as we saw this week—from the hands of one dead old communist to another live old communist; a state that in the not-distant past starved 30 million of its citizens to death; that fought America, by proxy and other means, for nearly half a century of cold and sometimes hot war; that jails, tortures and murders its political dissidents; that employs slave labor; that promotes nuclear proliferation; that forces abortion on women; that is committed to challenging the U.S. as the dominant military and economic power in the East. Can it be that, as Suettinger describes them, bona fide (present or former) officials of *this* regime were, as Darby describes them, major contributors to the DNC?

Well, the first half of the proposition is demonstrably true. At least four of the people who met with Clinton, and who are described as DNC donors, are Communist Party big shots who work indirectly—but absolutely—for the People's Republic of China. The people on Darby's list, apart from Johnny Chung, were: Hongye Zheng, chairman of the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade (CCPIT) and chairman of the China Chamber of International Commerce (CCOIC); Yan Sanzhong, president of the China Petro-Chemical Corporation; Jichun Huang, vice president of the China Inter-

continued on page 49

NATIONAL BESTSELLER


MAKING SENSE OF THE MANAGEMENT GURUS
THE WITCH DOCTORS
JOHN MICKLETHWAIT & ADRIAN WOOLDRIDGE
STAFF EDITORS OF THE ECONOMIST

GET THE BOTTOM LINE ON YOUR CONSULTANTS

"To any corporate stiff wondering where in the world the boss got *that* idea, *The Witch Doctors* is the place to go to find out."

—*The New York Times Book Review*

A Selection of the Book-of-the-Month Club and Executive Book Club
http://www.randomhouse.com/

TIMES BOOKS

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE NEW REPUBLIC

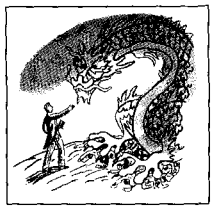
A Weekly Journal of Opinion

MARCH 10, 1997

FOUNDED 1914
WASHINGTON, D.C.
ISSUE 4,286

AMBASSADOR UNIVERSITY
LIBRARY

PO Box 111
Big Sandy, TX 75755



Cover by Eric Baker for THE NEW REPUBLIC. Illustration by Anthony Russo. Articles on pages 9, 12, 15, 17, 21 and 45.

4 **MICHAEL KELLY** TRB: CITIC-VIP Did China give to the DNC?

6 **CORRESPONDENCE** Federico Peña and his books; sex and the TNR employee &c.

9 **THE EDITORS** DESTRUCTIVE ENGAGEMENT Deng, Clinton and our failed China policy.

10 **NOTEBOOK** Alan Simpson teaches journalists a lesson, Steve Forbes sends Arizona a valentine, &c.

11 **HANNA ROSIN** ON THE HILL: TEAMWORK How determined Republicans and complaisant Democrats killed campaign finance reform in only four days.

12 **PETER BEINART** DOMESTIC PARTNERS Why Chinese-Americans stay silent about the abuses back home.

14 **SUSAN ELLINGWOOD** HOT AIR Two federal commissions propose to make air travel safe from terrorists. But their plans are costly, cumbersome and wouldn't stop Homer Simpson from planting a bomb.

15 **JOHN MAGGS** THE MYTH OF THE CHINA MARKET Our China policy says we must appease so we can sell to the world's greatest market. But that market is a fantasy.

17 **JOHN B. JUDIS** CHINATOWN The foreign policy establishmentarians have a good reason to push better relations with China: their bank accounts.

21 **STAN SESSER** THE BETRAYAL OF HONG KONG The fix is in between the Chinese government and the Hong Kong merchants. Everybody gets rich; nobody gets democracy.

27 **MICHAEL J. SANDEL** THE HARD QUESTIONS: BAD BET State lotteries are shooting craps with the lives of the poor.

28 **MADELEINE ALBRIGHT AND JEWISH IDENTITY** Walter Laqueur and Martin Peretz.

30 **STANLEY KAUFFMANN** ON FILMS: STATE OF AFFAIRS *The Daytrippers* makes banality fun; *Kama Sutra* makes sensuality no fun.

32 **SEAN WILENTZ** LIFE, LIBERTY, AND THE PURSUIT OF THOMAS JEFFERSON How a slaveholder and ideologue was also a great democrat.

39 **ALICE ROSE GEORGE** POEM *Ah, Icarus*

42 **MARK POLIZZOTTI** THE CLOWN PRINCE *Duchamp: A Biography* by Calvin Tomkins

45 **ANDREW J. NATHAN** DENG AND GONE *Troublemaker: One Man's Crusade Against China's Cruelty* by Harry Wu with George Vecsey; *The Deng Xiaoping Era: An Inquiry Into the Fate of Chinese Socialism, 1978-1994* by Maurice Meisner

50 **JED PERL** NEW YORK DIARIST: FORGET IT

Editor-in-Chief and Chairman
MARTIN PERETZ

Editor
MICHAEL KELLY
Literary Editor
LEON WIESELTIER
Executive Editor
MARGARET TALBOT
Senior Editors
JOHN B. JUDIS, CHARLES LANE (On Leave), WILLIAM POWERS, ANDREW SULLIVAN, JAMES WOOD
Managing Editor
PETER BEINART
Legal Affairs
JEFFREY ROSEN
Films
STANLEY KAUFFMANN
Theater
ROBERT BRUSTEIN
Poetry
MARK STRAND
Dance
MINDY ALOFF
Photography
LUC SANTE
Art
JED PERL
New Republic Books (Basic Books)
PAUL GOLOB
New Republic Online (Electronic Newsstand)
BRIAN HECHT
Contributing Editors
FOUAD AJAMI, ELIOT A. COHEN, STANLEY CROUCH, JEAN BETHKE ELSHTAIN, NATHAN GLAZER, ANN HULBERT, MICKEY KAUS, MICHAEL KINSLEY, CHARLES KRAUTHAMMER, VINT LAWRENCE, MICHAEL LEWIS, GLENN LOURY, DOUGLAS G. McGRATH, LOUIS MENAND, DAVID RIEFF, ROGER ROSENBLATT, MICHAEL J. SANDEL, MAGGIE SCARF, ROBERT SHAPIRO, RONALD STEEL, E.V. THAW, TOM TOLES, TATYANA TOLSTAYA, MICHAEL WALZER, JACOB WEISBERG, SEAN WILENTZ, ALAN WOLFE, C. VANN WOODWARD, ROBERT WRIGHT
Special Correspondent
ANNA HUSARSKA
Associate Editors
JACOB HEILBRUNN, HANNA ROSIN, RUTH SHALIT
Design Consultant
ERIC BAKER
Editorial-Corporate Coordinator
LAURA E. OBOLENSKY
Production Director
BRUCE STEINKE
Production Manager
HENRY RIGGS
Assistant Editors
DEBRA DUROCHER, SUSAN ELLINGWOOD, ROBYN GEAREY, STEPHEN GLASS
Assistant Literary Editor
MELANIE REHAK
Staff Writer
JONATHAN CHAIT
Reporter-Researchers
CATHERINE ELTON, SYDNEY FREEDBERG JR., ROMESH RATNESAR

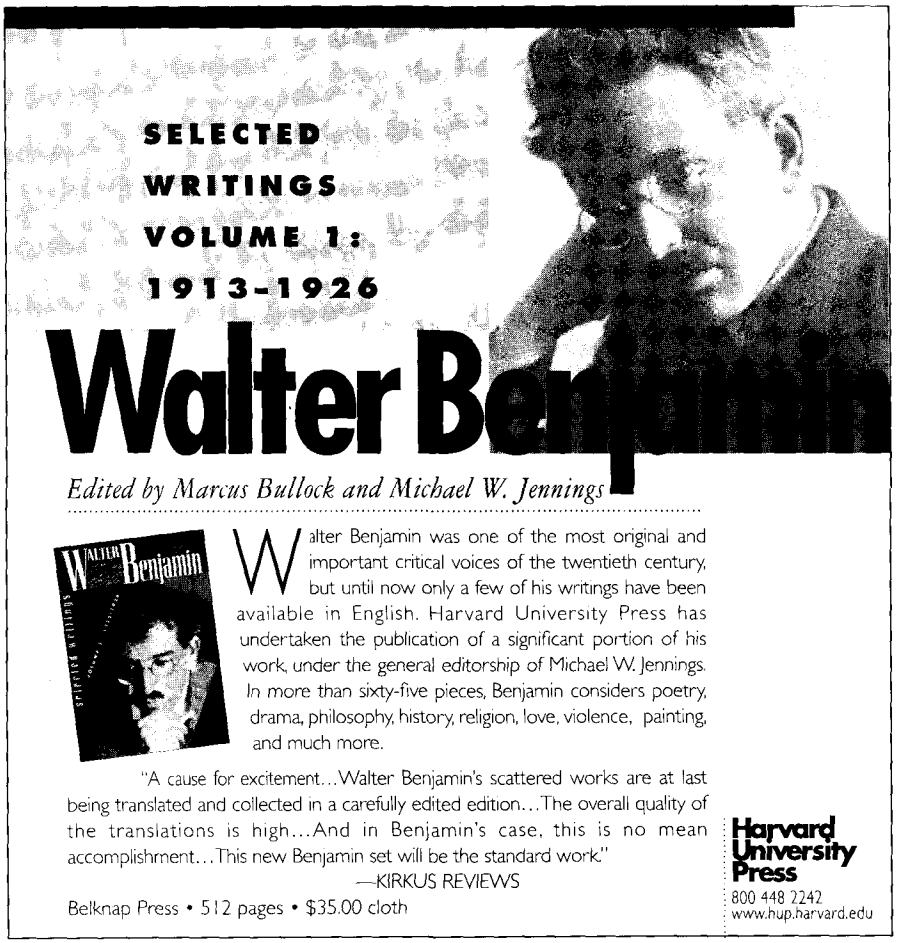
President and Publisher
JOAN M. STAPLETON
Vice President
JAMES J. McCABE
Associate Publisher-Advertising
JENNIFER BARRETT
Associate Publisher-Circulation
JAMES J. SMITH
Controller
CHRISTINA R. BONIFER
Circulation Director
CECELIA M. STEPHENS
Marketing Manager
SHABNAM K. SHARMA
Advertising Manager
ASHLEY H. COOPER
Accounting Assistants
JACQUELYN M. McCULLOUGH, JEANNINE HARRIS
Circulation Assistant
CLAIRE P. STERN
Advertising Assistant
KATHLEEN WILEY
Back Issues and Reception
MARGO JOHNSON

THE NEW REPUBLIC, Vol. 216, Number 10, Issue 4,286, March 10, 1997. (Printed in the U.S. on February 19, 1997.) Published weekly (except for combined issues dated Jan. 6 & 13, July 14 & 21, Aug. 11 & 18, and Sept. 8 & 15, 1997) at 1220 19th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20036. Telephone (202) 331-7494. The New Republic Advertising Sales Office (212) 702-4882. Yearly subscriptions, $69.97; foreign, $99.97; Canada, $84.97. Back issues, $3.50 (includes postage & handling).

© 1997 by The New Republic, Inc.

(ISSN 0028-6583). Periodicals postage paid at Washington, DC, and additional mailing offices. Indexed in Readers' Guide, Media Review Digest. Microform, Canadian Periodical Index, CD-ROM, issue and article copies are available through University Microfilms Intnl., 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106. Telephone 1-800-521-0600. Internet mail address: tnr@aol.com Member, Audit Bureau of Circulations. Unsolicited manuscripts can be returned only if accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope. Subscribers: Please send all remittances, changes of address, and subscription inquiries to Subscription Service Dept., The New Republic, P.O. Box 602, Mount Morris, IL 61054. For subscription problems call 800-827-1289.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



Edited by Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings

Walter Benjamin was one of the most original and important critical voices of the twentieth century, but until now only a few of his writings have been available in English. Harvard University Press has undertaken the publication of a significant portion of his work, under the general editorship of Michael W. Jennings. In more than sixty-five pieces, Benjamin considers poetry, drama, philosophy, history, religion, love, violence, painting, and much more.

"A cause for excitement...Walter Benjamin's scattered works are at last being translated and collected in a carefully edited edition...The overall quality of the translations is high...And in Benjamin's case, this is no mean accomplishment...This new Benjamin set will be the standard work."
—KIRKUS REVIEWS

Belknap Press • 512 pages • $35.00 cloth

Harvard University Press
800 448 2242
www.hup.harvard.edu

It may be small. But the Bose® Acoustic Wave® music system is definitely an overachiever. The unit features a compact disc player, an AM/FM radio, a handy remote control, and our patented acoustic waveguide speaker technology. And it produces a rich, natural sound quality comparable to audio systems costing thousands of dollars. We know that's hard to believe. So we're ready to prove it. Call or write now for our complimentary guide to this award-winning system. Because, like the system itself, it's available directly from Bose.

Call today. 1-800-898-BOSE, ext. A486.

Mr./Mrs./Ms. _____
Name (Please Print) _____ Daytime Telephone ( ) _____ Evening Telephone ( ) _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Or mail to: Bose Corporation, Dept. CDD-A486, The Mountain, Framingham, MA 01701-9168.

BOSE®
Better sound through research®

CORRESPONDENCE

Who's learning what?

To the editors:

The sneering tone and personal insult in Hanna Rosin's article "Educating Feddie" (February 3) hardly makes for worthwhile reading. What does the reader learn? Amazingly enough, Secretary Peña is preparing for his confirmation hearing. And that a man can be vilified for doing his job. You missed a big opportunity by failing to add that this insidious confirmation preparation is happening throughout Washington with all other Cabinet secretary designees.

The reporting is sloppy: Secretary Peña was at home in Virginia, not Albuquerque, when President Clinton asked him to serve as Secretary of Energy. President Clinton did not ask him to take his house off the market. There were no 600-page binders, although they are threering.

Provocative passing references are inaccurate: the Denver International Airport did not cost three times the original estimate. Secretary Peña did not fire whistleblowers at the Denver airport. No FBI agents were transferred anywhere. (This tidbit seems to relate to an employee of the inspector general's office—an independent arm of the Transportation Department—and never involved Secretary Peña.)

Secretary Peña is well-equipped to be Energy Secretary. His management success at Transportation—downsizing the workforce by 10 percent, eliminating 1,450 pages of regulations—is clearly applicable to the Department of Energy. At DOT, he introduced a financing program so government could leverage private sector money for public infrastructure improvements. He was an advocate for safety, improving and making safety standards consistent across the aviation industry. He successfully opened foreign markets to U.S. airlines. He did all this by negotiating, building consensus and creating partnerships. In short, he used leadership skills that the head of any Cabinet agency, especially the Energy Secretary, needs.

CARMEN E. MACDOUGALL
Deputy Assistant Secretary for Communications, Department of Energy
Washington, D.C.

Hanna Rosin replies:

Some corrections taken: Secretary Peña had just left Albuquerque, and he and the president joked about taking his house off the market; it was not an executive

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

command. But MacDougall's letter has its own sloppy moments. The "provocative passing references" to the firings of whistleblowers involved with the Denver airport were not my invention; as I wrote, they were allegations members of the Senate committee were investigating. As for the airport's cost, three times its original estimate was generous; city auditors most recently put it at five. More misleading than this niggling, though, is the impression left by MacDougall's letter: that the confirmation of Peña was business as usual, a routine transfer of "leadership skills" from one agency to another. As I reported, preparing Peña was an extraordinary effort, involving thousands of staffers and thousands of pages. And this was because he was extraordinarily unprepared. As for his work at DOT, Peña's effort at "improving ... safety standards" is not something I would brag about.

Collective accomplishment

To the editors:

Michael J. Sandel ("Anti-Social Security," February 3) is right to argue that the "political vulnerability of the American welfare state can be traced to the shallow moral foundation on which it was built," but he is wrong to describe that shallowness simply in terms of the rhetoric and rationale by which first Social Security and then the Great Society were defended. It may be true that Franklin Roosevelt, as Sandel states, "did not rest his case on a communal ethic" but rather sold Social Security as a private insurance scheme, but what gave meaning to both Social Security and the Great Society were the social movements—the labor movement and the movements of the 1960s—that pushed for, and beyond, the reforms themselves. Whether we live in a hostile, competitive and self-interested society, or see ourselves as "a community of citizens engaged in a common project," as Sandel puts it, does not depend on rhetoric, presidential or otherwise. The welfare state always depended upon the existence of large-scale social movements and forms of thought able to frame and contextualize the corrosive effects of the capitalist economy. The limits of those movements in the past, and their absence today, are the reason we are threatened with the privatization of 100 years of collective accomplishment.

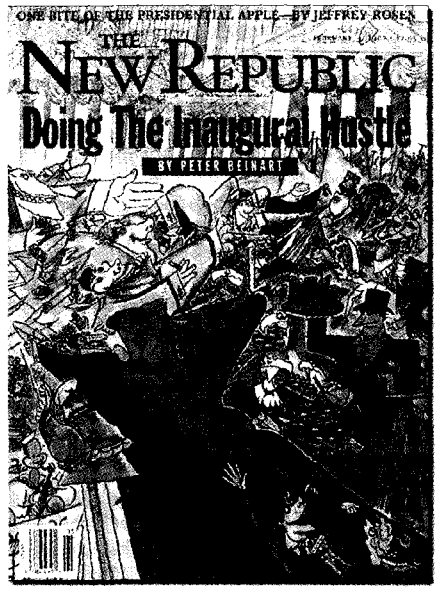
ELI ZARETSKY
Columbia, Missouri

True peace?

To the editors:

Your February 3 editorial "Toward True Peace" contains two seriously misleading statements. The first one—"With the Hebron agreement, just about 99 percent of Palestinian Arabs living in the territories won by Israel in the Six Day War live under Palestinian authority and jurisdiction...."—leaves the impression that Israeli troops no longer exercise power over the Palestinian population. In point of fact, only 26 percent of the Palestinians in the West Bank live in areas fully under the control of the Palestinian Authority—the 4 percent of the territory that constitutes the so-called "Area A." Seventy percent of them live in "Area B," where the Israel Defense Forces continue to exercise full control over "internal security."

Thus, the second statement, "... further Israeli withdrawals are mostly about empty land," is either misinformed or disingenuous. Further troop withdrawals



are in fact about 95 percent of the area of the West Bank, in which over two-thirds of the Palestinians continue to live under Israeli occupation.

GILBERT D. KULICK
Chevy Chase, Maryland

Buyline

To the editors:

An offhand remark in Joseph Finder's review of Edward Epstein's book on Armand Hammer ("Good Riddance," December 30) inaccurately attributes a practice to the Christian Science Church. Since its founding in 1879, there has been no time when the Church of Christ, Scientist has had in place, or exercised, a policy of buying up books critical of its founder, Mary Baker Eddy. Our church's policy remains the same as always, to balance views on Mrs. Eddy or the church we consider incorrect or misleading by offering information we see as accurate, as we are doing in this case.

M. VICTOR WESTBERG
The First Church of Christ, Scientist
Boston, Massachusetts

How big a bite?

To the editors:

In "One Bite at the Apple" (February 3), Jeffrey Rosen writes that, assuming Paula Jones's allegations are true, he does not think her charges against President Clinton "should be legally actionable" and that a judge "could dismiss" her case "on a motion for summary judgment."

While it is true her claims under civil rights and constitutional provisions are legally very weak, Rosen makes the same error as other media reporting her case; he acts as if her entire case were based on a "sexual harassment" law. It is not.

Apart from her legally weak claims, her complaint alleges intentional infliction of emotional distress and defamation. Thus, one issue is whether Clinton intended to cause her severe emotional distress by his conduct. Clinton allegedly told her that her immediate boss was a "good friend" of his and at the end of the encounter he told her, "You are smart. Let's keep this between ourselves."

Given what allegedly transpired in that room, for a judge to dismiss her case before a trial occurs would be totally without justification. Jones wants to prove that, for his own political protection and in retaliation for rejecting him, Clinton intended to intimidate her into keeping silent about something that she clearly would have an emotional and psychological need to speak about. She is entitled to try to prove this by effective cross-examination of Clinton before a trier of fact that can observe his demeanor. No judge can correctly say that this is an impossible feat for her to accomplish.

Therefore, while Rosen says "that a judge could conceivably let a jury decide what Clinton meant," the truth is that, if Jones desires it, a judge must let a jury decide what Clinton meant.

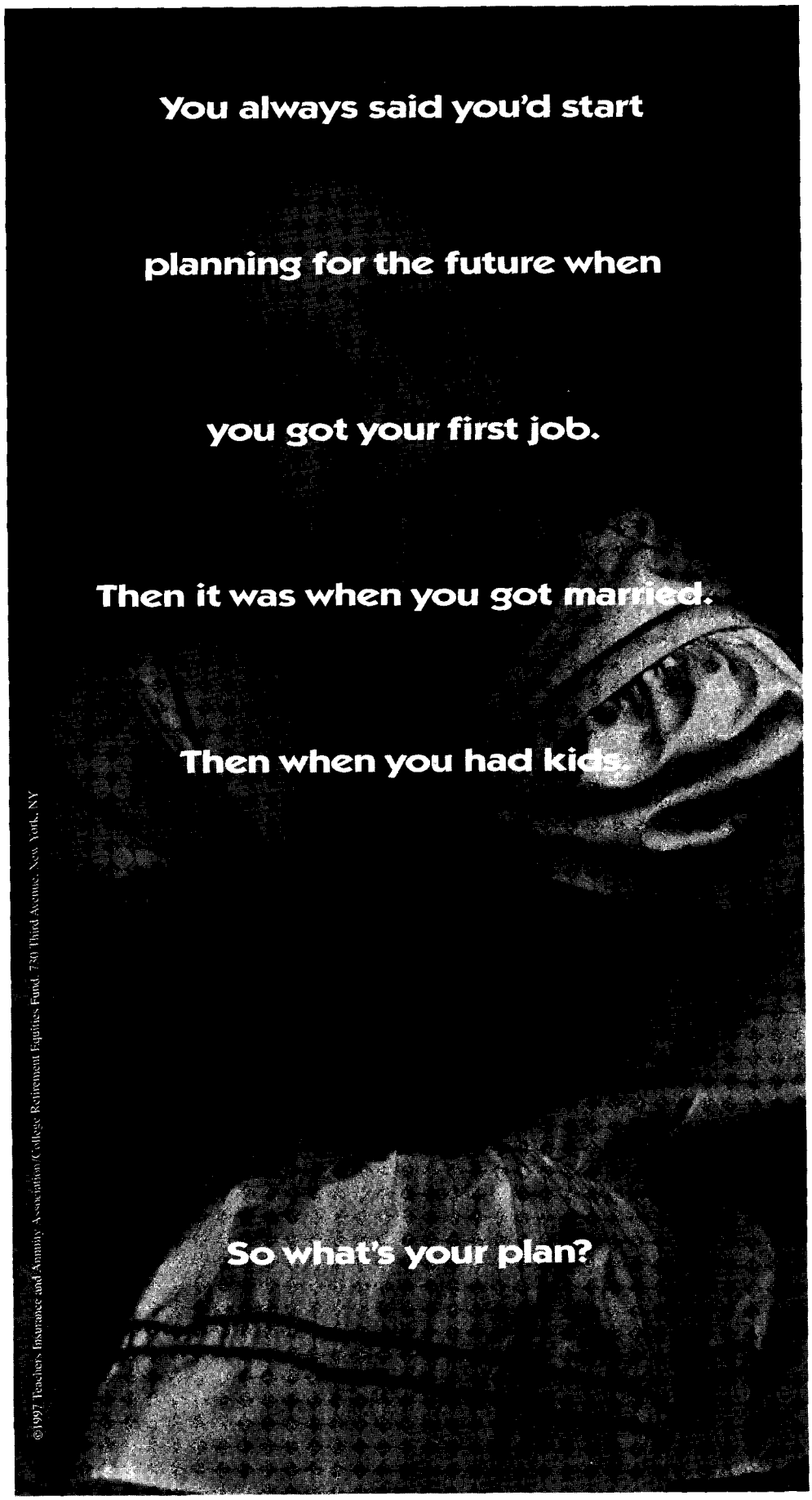
ALLAN FAVISH
Tarzana, California

To the editors:

I am fascinated by Jeffrey Rosen's explanation of his legal assessment of the Paula Jones sexual harassment case. For Clinton to summon an employee to his hotel suite, drop his trousers, pull out his thing and tell the employee to kiss it, in your legal affairs expert's opinion, does not constitute sexual harassment. Instead, Rosen argues, this is "sexual expression at work that should be protected." TNR must be one hell of a place to work!

PHILIP CHRISTENSON
Washington, D.C.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED


You always said you'd start
planning for the future when
you got your first job.
Then it was when you got married.
Then when you had kids.
So what's your plan?
©1997 Teachers Insurance and Annuity Association (College Retirement Equities Fund, 730 Third Avenue, New York, NY

TIAA-CREF.

Proven

Solutions

To Last

a Lifetime.

Let's face it. Planning for tomorrow is easier said than done. Especially when you're busy making ends meet today. With low-cost tax-deferred investment programs, insurance coverage, and personal annuity savings plans, TIAA-CREF can help make things a lot easier for you. Just ask the 1.8 million people we're helping build a safe, secure future. So before one of your kids celebrates another birthday, call 1 800 226-0147 for more complete information, including charges and expenses, plus a free Personal Investing Kit. It contains our variable annuity prospectuses. Please read them carefully before you invest or send money. TIAA-CREF. Financial services exclusively for people in education and research.

www.tiaa-cref.org

TIAA CREF

Ensuring the future for those who shape it.℠

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE NEW REPUBLIC

MARCH 10, 1997

DESTRUCTIVE ENGAGEMENT

Deng Xiaoping has just died, and the first thing to be said is that we shall almost certainly look on his like again. Deng was known as the great reformer in the communist history of China, and it is true that he was responsible for momentous change. But not all change is reform and not all reform is change. The world-historical experiment of the Deng era was to identify and to institute economic reform that was not political change. And this disjunction between the economic and the political, this severance of capitalism from democracy, is Deng's distinctive contribution to the taxonomy of late twentieth-century tyranny. In Deng's China, the politics of communism was joined to the economics of fascism. (The rising tide that lifts all boats is also a fine method of drowning.) Deng did not end the tyranny in China. He modernized it. And he proved, as his successors will surely continue to prove, that the modernization of tyranny is not a contradiction in terms, as many Westerners wish. China under Deng, where prosperity did not entail liberty, was not an anomaly. It was a model of its own.

The big news about China in our day is not that it is making itself capitalist. The big news is that China is making itself into a superpower. And its timing is exquisite. China is transforming itself into a superpower at a time when the United States has settled smugly into the belief that it is the only superpower in the world. America has just won a titanic twilight struggle against another faraway communist state the size of a continent, and it is glad to be at rest. The United States is in no mood, and in no money, for another era of "containment" and "bi-polarity." China waited for the end of history to make its move. Pretty clever.

The policy of the Clinton administration is commonly called "engagement." In the early years of Clinton's presidency, it was called "commercial engagement," but this was too damning an admission. Then it was called "constructive engagement," but this, too, was rather awkward, since the Democrats had spent the 1980s attacking the Republicans for "constructive engagement" in South Africa. Thus it is "engagement" that we are now called upon to support, and who cannot? Surely disengagement from a country such as China would be a disaster, since there is no other country such as China. So let us engage! Yes, of course, the president will be delighted to see you ...

But there are a thousand styles of engagement, and none of them is simple. American policy toward China must honor and balance and mix three things: strategy, morality, economy. In the disputation that is now taking place between the moralists and the economicists, however, strategy is often overlooked. Strategically speaking, the most important fact about China is that it has embarked on a program of massive militarization. It has declined to take part in the age of downsizing. It is upsizing, and frantically. (This, too, is a mark of the fascist character of its capitalism.) It is only a matter of decades before China becomes the other military superpower on earth. All of Asia now lives in the likelihood of that reality. Moreover, China has already become a monster of the proliferation of advanced weaponry. The Clinton administration knows this, and does nothing hard about it. There are Chinese cruise missiles in Iran's arsenal. But yes, of course, the president will be delighted to see you ...

Morally speaking, China is the last great totalitarian society in the world. (No, it does not seem intent on exporting its totalitarianism to other countries; but since it holds in its own country 22 percent of the world's population, the point is somewhat moot.) The Clinton administration knows this, too. It prefers, however, not to press the lofty point. It prefers to speak economically about China and its legendary market, and then to mutter a few vulgar Reaganisms about free markets leading inevitably to free societies. But as John Maggs shows in this issue (see page 15), the Chinese market is not only a legend, it is also a myth. All that the Chinese market can accomplish for America right now is to make a few thousand American executives very wealthy.

It is, then, a pretty easy call. Strategic considerations and moral considerations must override economic considerations. As a consequence of China's determined pursuit of military hegemony in Asia and its mischievous diffusion of missile technology and its systematic violation of human rights, the United States, in the name of its values and its interests, must engage China adversarially. This, too, is a form of engagement.

But this will not happen. For we must now add, to strategy, morality and economics, another element: politics. With each new day, we learn more about the Pacific Rim town of Little Rock, about the political exploitation of foreign policy by the Clintonites in Washington. Clinton's China policy will turn out to be another instance of the disfiguring philosophy that has guided so much of the Clinton presidency, according to which there is nothing that is not for sale. Call it Ron Brownism. •

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

NOTEBOOK

RABBIT, RUN: What do you get the guy who has everything? Steve Forbes has his own magazine, *Forbes*; his own 1996 GOP presidential bid; his own policy mantra, "a flat tax that would truly cut your taxes"; his own nationwide "issues advocacy" group, Americans for Hope, Growth and Opportunity (AHGO) and now—as of Valentine's Day—his own toll-free hotline. After a brief, upbeat recording, and a minute or so of dynamically vapid hold music, the caller is offered the chance to receive an informational packet from AHGO—that is, to get on AHGO's mailing list—or just to give an on-the-spot donation. The toll-free number is being publicized through two radio ads in Arizona, with a Minnesota campaign to start this week. The choice of Minnesota makes perfect sense: Governor Arne Carlson is introducing a bill to substantially expand charter schools and tuition tax credits—just the kind of state level, anti-Big Government reform to which AHGO is genuinely committed. But why Arizona? "Well, uh, ah, obviously, it's a state that is very anti-tax," says an AHGO spokesman. And also a state with an early primary? "Well, uh, if you're asking me, did Steve Forbes win Arizona, yeah!" One presumes he's referring to 1996—and thinking of 2000.

TAKING FLIGHT: "I am Dr. Mary Anigbo, principal of Marcus Garvey Charter School," chimed the voice on the answering machine. "Perhaps you've heard of our school's efforts to educate urban children, especially boys." Perhaps. Anigbo and three of her staff at the Afrocentric Washington, D.C., school face assault charges, you might recall, resulting from a racially tinged scuffle on Garvey grounds with *Washington Times* reporter Susan Ferrechio and a couple of cops on December 3. Though Anigbo and the staffers pleaded not guilty, Ferrechio, who was reporting a piece on charter schools, says she was assaulted by a mob that included Anigbo. Ferrechio left the school grounds, complained to the police and returned with two officers and a *Times* photographer, only to face a crowd screaming racial epithets. Judge Truman A. Morrison III recently set a June 23 trial date, after defense lawyers asked for a delay until summer, according to *The Washington Post*, "so that Anigbo and the staff members can tend to academic matters." Those matters apparently include travel. As Anigbo explains in her recorded telephone message, she plans to accompany a group of Garvey students on an extended field trip to Ghana and Senegal in March that will cost about $2,000 per person; and she needs our donations for the excursion, which has been planned since September. "These are boys who have never seen any environment except the hard life in the city; so they have nothing to look forward to, except what they know," Anigbo intones. "We want to take them to Africa so that their world can become one filled with new possibilities." Then comes the hard sell: "Please, will you give us $40 towards this freedom flight?" Freedom flight? Interesting choice of words, Dr. Anigbo.

DOUBLE STANDARD: When President Clinton presented his new budget, he offered two tax breaks for college students: a $1,500 tax credit or a $10,000 tax deduction. In order to qualify for the credit, a student would need a "B-" average. The deduction, however, comes with no strings attached. When Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin testified before the House Ways and Means Committee, Republican freshman Kenny Hulshof pointed out that this would slap a grade-point requirement on lower- and middle-income students, but not on the wealthy. Rubin replied evasively that it depended on the taxpayer's "individual circumstances." Well, here are the circumstances: the higher your tax bracket, the more a tax deduction is worth. A family paying the top rate of 39.6 percent could cash in on the tax deduction to the tune of $3,960, more than twice the value of the tax credit. For families in lower brackets, the deduction would be worth less than the credit. On fairness grounds, this plan gets a failing grade.

BREAKING THE NEWS: Alan Simpson, the ever so down-home former senator from Wyoming, never could stand the press. And now he's devoted a book, *Right in the Old Gazoo*, to exposing how reporters distort events to bolster an agenda. But Simpson's book indulges in a little bolstering and distorting itself. In April 1990, Simpson and a handful of other lawmakers visited Saddam Hussein in Iraq. The Iraqis taped the meeting and later distributed what they said was a partial transcript. This was unfortunate for the Wyoming senator, because it turns out he told the Iraqi potentate: "I believe your problems lie with the Western media, and not with the U.S. government. As long as you're isolated from the media, the press—and it is a haughty and pampered press—they all consider themselves political geniuses, that is, the journalists do. They are very cynical. What I advise is that you invite them to come here and see for themselves." The quote is interesting not simply as a specimen of fawning appeasement, but because only a few weeks before, Saddam hanged a British journalist on trumped-up espionage charges. So how does Simpson's book handle this rather unfortunate chapter in, as its subtitle puts it, his "lifetime of scrapping with the press"? He repeats an earlier statement that the transcript was edited, but does not challenge the rendition of his specific remarks. And he goes on to say that he protested the hanging of the British journalist, which would have been noble, had he really done it. Neil Lewis of *The New York Times*, who interviewed Simpson in October 1990 about the Iraq meeting and asked about the "unfortunate" juxtaposition of his remarks and the British journalist's fate, tells us that Mr. Simpson seemed quite unaware of the hanging he claims to have protested. It appears Mr. Simpson is involved in one of those brazen rewrites of history. Just the sort of thing he says the press does all the time. •

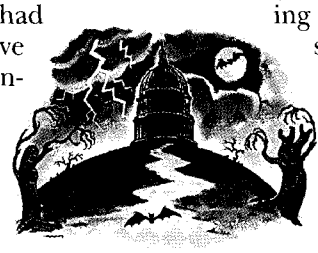
LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ON THE HILL

TEAMWORK

By Hanna Rosin

As hit jobs go, Senator Mitch McConnell's was fairly simple. A shameless proponent of getting *more* money into politics, the Kentucky Republican was his party's natural choice to off the latest clean-up effort, the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act, sponsored by Senators John McCain and Russell Feingold. But the victim was on life support before McConnell even started. All the wholesome Republicans who had supported McCain-Feingold in the last Congress—Alan Simpson, Nancy Kassebaum, Bill Cohen—were gone, leaving only Fred Thompson to uphold the GOP's end of the deal. And the day after the November election, Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott had already delivered the fatal blow: "Do I have any, you know, really good reason?" Lott pondered at his post-election spin conference, pausing coyly to toy with the bill's fate before going for the kneecaps. "I just instinctively don't like it."



The story should have ended there. But McConnell and his henchmen were not content to just let the bill die; they needed to send a message. And the Hill Democrats, despite their pious public pronouncements of support for campaign finance reform, were all too happy to hear it, and even to help—in their own snaky way—with the execution. Between the two sides, the execution of McCain-Feingold was committed with a brutal efficiency: the cycle between hopeful signs of life and outraged eulogy lasted only four days.

"Fifty hand-delivered packages, fifty phone calls, hundreds of conversations with staff," brags a Senate staffer coordinating the "grand central station" of Operation Kill McCain-Feingold, run out of McConnell's office. "We were on it quick, we weren't going to let them get away with it, we never let up," the staffer says, picking up speed. "We've never been busier, never been more energized."

McConnell focused particularly on freshman senators who "might have some misguided notions of reform left over from their campaigns," says the staffer. He dropped in on the freshmen, one by one, to personally deliver his message. Here is how one freshman senator describes the visit. "When he called I thought, 'how nice that such a senior member is dropping by to welcome me.' But mostly it seemed he wanted to talk about the campaign finance reform bill, and see what I was thinking. I wasn't sure, and he said something like, 'you're not going to be a problem for us, are you?' It was pretty intimidating." The thumbscrews did the trick. None of the freshmen, not even Sam Brownback, who co-authored the version of McCain-Feingold in the House last year, now supports the bill.

Indeed, the smothering of McCain-Feingold was so swift and so sure that it perversely fueled a paranoid sense that McCain-Feingold the Undead might rise again. "A stripped-down version of the bill may come to the floor, or a totally different bill," the staffer frets. "But if that happens, we will blunt it."

The only surprising twist in this year's campaign finance fiasco revolves around an emerging subplot, soon to take center stage: the investigation of Clinton's fund-raising abuses conducted by the Senate Governmental Affairs Committee, chaired by Fred Thompson. Republicans say they can't support any reform bill until the investigation is complete, so Clinton can't use the new rules as an excuse. The logic here is exactly backwards: passing a clean-up bill would make the Clintons look more guilty, not less.

But the real shocker is the Democrats. The Republicans may have been ruthless, but at least they were open. The Democrats' strategy for derailing the bill was nastier, in a way, for all its passive sneakiness. Senate Minority Leader Thomas Daschle spent last week howling that the probe was a witch-hunt, that Thompson can't be trusted to snoop into Republican abuses as well and threatening to filibuster the committee's funding. Daschle's fury would be understandable, if it were not manufactured. In a Wednesday meeting with Thompson, Daschle actually encouraged him to keep the hearings partisan, according to several of his colleagues. Daschle "put the pressure on Thompson to stick to investigating presidential staff," according to one senator, "to avoid broadening it to cover congressional campaigns." The last thing Daschle wants is a frenzy of public outrage over general fund-raising abuses forcing senators to sign up for McCain-Feingold. One of its provisions encourages candidates to raise 60 percent of campaign money in their state. Daschle, like most Democrats, now raises only 12 percent in-state. Keeping the hearings partisan makes them less credible.

Of course, the goo-goos protest that they are still kicking. "I can't believe you would write that," says a wounded Russ Feingold, when I suggest the bill is expiring. "That's just garbage, absolute Washington claptrap. We haven't even begun yet." But his evidence of a nascent mass movement is unconvincing: a "grass-roots upheaval"? By that he means a press conference with Common Cause. "Leadership"? That's a reference to Bill Clinton, who, Feingold proudly reminds me, demanded to see the legislation "on his desk by July 4." No doubt he did. But there is also no doubt that, in his February 11 summit with Hill Republicans, Clinton went into the room with McCain-Feingold on his wish list for the 105th Congress. He came out with five agreed-upon bipartisan priorities that conspicuously did not include the bill, or any version of it. And he was still smiling. •

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

China's codependents in the U.S.

DOMESTIC PARTNERS

By Peter Beinart

"As long as Beijing's leaders abuse their own people, business with China cannot be business as usual," declared Congresswoman Anna Eshoo on May 26, 1994, before voting to deny China Most Favored Nation trade status. George Koo, a constituent and longtime supporter of the Palo Alto Democrat, was not pleased. So when MFN cropped up again in 1996, Koo arranged for a delegation of local Chinese-Americans to pay a visit to Eshoo, whose district has one of the highest percentages of Chinese-Americans of any in the country. They suggested that the congresswoman rethink her position, and they kept on suggesting. By the time MFN reached the House floor, "I had been beating up on her office for quite a while," Koo remembers. And a few minutes after the vote, he got a call from Eshoo. She had switched sides.

The venerable story of American foreign policy as ethnic politics? Actually, no. In the venerable story, when the despots back home oppress the folk back home, hyphenated Americans push for the hardest of hard lines. During the cold war, émigrés from the Soviet bloc—Zbigniew Brzezinski, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, Madeleine Albright, as well as ethnic lobbying groups—counseled endlessly against accommodation with their mother countries. What George Koo did with Anna Eshoo was the opposite.

And the opposite is where most Chinese-Americans come down on the question of human rights and the homeland. America's emerging conflict with the dictatorship of China differs from America's decades-long conflict with the dictatorships of the Soviet bloc in many ways, but among the least heralded is the different role being played by Americans of Chinese descent. During the cold war, denouncing communist Poland was a sure vote-getter in Chicago, and in Miami, candidates had to practically declare war on Cuba. And, to some degree, this grass-roots pressure forced the Beltway's realists and relativists to keep human rights on their agenda. But confronting China on human rights won't win you votes in the Bay area.

Perhaps the biggest reason is nationalism. China's rise has heartened those Chinese-Americans with close ties to East Asia (and since two-thirds of Chinese-Americans were born in China, Taiwan or Hong Kong, most have close ties). Of course, nationalism can feed anti-government sentiment, too—when émigrés deem old country regimes illegitimate. But most Chinese-Americans don't see Jiang Zemin as illegitimate in the way Cuban-Americans see Fidel Castro as illegitimate. Some attribute this to culture—a predisposition to identify criticism of the regime with disloyalty to the nation. But even those sympathetic to internal dissidents are disturbed by American pressure on human rights. And this discomfort has less to do with culture than with history. Asked how the United States should address repression in China, Lester Lee, a former University of California regent, says, "We should not even talk about it because it only shows imperialistic ways of thinking. This may have worked fifty or 100 years ago, but we cannot go to China the way we did in the past." S.B. Woo, former lieutenant governor of Delaware and a member of the Committee of One Hundred, a group of prestigious Chinese-Americans that supports unconditional MFN, bristles at U.S. criticism of China's heavy-handed reassertion of control in Hong Kong. "China has gone through 150 years of humiliation at the hands of Western powers.... China ceded Hong Kong as a war indemnity. Imagine if South America had forced the United States to give up Texas." When people in China take to the streets themselves, many Chinese-Americans sympathize. But American arm-twisting conjures up unpleasant memories of China's colonial past. When Washington derailed Beijing's bid to host the 2000 Olympics, thousands of Bay area Chinese-Americans signed petitions in protest. "It had nothing to do with the government," says Norman Matloff, a University of California at Davis computer scientist with close ties to the Bay area Chinese-American community. "It was an issue of nationalism."

And even the Chinese-Americans most suspicious of Beijing—those from Taiwan—still overwhelmingly favor MFN (89 percent in a Bay area poll by the Chinese-language daily *Sing Tao*). Their reasoning, like that of the Taiwanese government, is economic. Overseas Chinese account for roughly 70 percent of foreign investment in the People's Republic, and Chinese-Americans are well positioned either to set up shop in China themselves or to go to work for U.S. companies in need of representatives with contacts and language skills. Koo, for instance, travels to China four times a year consulting for high-tech companies like Hewlett Packard. Harry Wu, the human rights crusader who dreams of a Holocaust museum-style memorial to the Chinese labor camps in which he sojourned, admits that it is Koo's perspective, not his, that rules. "Chinese-Americans are very focused on Chinese markets. Many people get a green card, or even asylum, and go back to China to do business ... and when you do business with China you fall silent."

Of course, both nationalism and business opportunity have less relevance to second-, third- and fourth-generation Chinese-Americans, many of whom have never lived outside the U.S., do not speak a Chinese language and refer to themselves as Asian American. But the civil rights organizations that these younger Americans of Chinese ancestry populate are also noticeably unenthusiastic about confronting China on human rights. Groups like the Organization of Chinese Americans, the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Where We Stand

By Albert Shanker, President
American Federation of Teachers

Getting Their Two Cents In

What must we do to fix our education system? Members of the general public, parents, and teachers agree that we need higher academic standards and high standards of conduct for all our students. They believe that, until we have these things, no other reform can succeed. But what about the students, and particularly teenagers? If we institute tougher standards, will students simply laugh and ignore them—as many ignore the work they are given now? The usual picture of teenagers is not encouraging. We hear that they are uninterested in education and contemptuous of students who do work hard. They come to school mainly to see their friends, can hardly wait for the school day to be over, and get through their classes doing as little as possible.

Students want adults to draw the line and demand more of them.

But "Getting By: What American Teenagers Really Think About Their Schools," the new report from Public Agenda, presents a picture that is more complicated—and far more encouraging. The report, a sequel to earlier Public Agenda studies of public and teacher opinion about the schools, is based on national telephone interviews and focus groups with teenagers. The surprise is that these youngsters are remarkably similar to teachers and other adults in many of their ideas about the value of education and the need for higher standards.

Not only are students convinced that getting an education is vital to their future success, they also agree with teachers and other adults about the importance of tougher standards of discipline. Seventy-one percent say that disruptive students are a big problem in their classes. And they are hard-nosed about the way to take care of the problem—kick out the "constant troublemakers." Eighty-three percent say this would help them learn more, which puts them solidly in line with the views that teachers and other members of the public revealed in earlier Public Agenda reports.

What about academic standards? Students admit that expectations about their work are often low and they take full advantage of that fact. But many also seem to be disappointed that they are allowed to "glide through." As one student told researchers, "They practically hand you a diploma.... If you had to work harder for it, then you would be actually learning something...." Undoubtedly, the teenagers that Public Agenda surveyed are testing limits, and, like most kids involved in that game, they are also yearning for adults to draw the line and demand more of them.

What do they think should be demanded? Like the teachers and other adults surveyed by Public Agenda, the students want higher academic standards that are consistently enforced. Three-quarters of the teenagers said, "a good command of the English language" should be required for high school graduation. The same percentage said that automatic promotion is a bad idea: "Schools should only pass students when they have learned what is expected of them." And a big majority (84 percent) rejected the idea that less should be expected of kids from disadvantaged backgrounds. The result of toughening standards and holding students to them? A majority believes that most students would pay more attention to their work and would learn more. Public Agenda researchers found little difference among racial and ethnic groups when it came to support for higher standards. However, African-American teenagers were much more likely to consider traditional academic subjects, like American history, chemistry, and advanced math, "extremely important" than their white counterparts.

This merely scratches the surface of a very rich report, but there is one more thing that should be noted. The study included a small group of private school students and, when Public Agenda asked public and private school students to rate their teachers, private school teachers got better marks. Does this mean that they are better? Probably not. It's more likely that the difference in responses reflected differences in the schools over which the teachers had little control. Why shouldn't a larger percentage of private school teachers be warm and enthusiastic? Few have the overcrowded classes that many public school teachers face; they teach in schools that typically refuse to admit kids with behavior problems and toss out ones who develop these problems; and they know that the school backs them in demanding hard work of the students. If we gave kids the standards they are calling for, many of the differences they find between private and public school teachers would disappear.

Should we be surprised at the students' call for standards? I don't think so. Anybody who has taught teenagers realizes that, beneath the sometimes obnoxious shell some of them assume, they are fair-minded and smart. The students Public Agenda talked to know that their schools are letting them down by letting them get by—they even know that standards would help to remedy the problem. It is up to us to make sure they get that help.

For copies of "Getting By" and the earlier reports ("First Things First," "Assignment Incomplete," and "Given the Circumstances"), call 212-686-6610.

Mr. Shanker's comments appear under the auspices of the American Federation of Teachers. Reader correspondence is invited. Address Mr. Shanker at AFT, 555 New Jersey Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20001. © 1997 by Albert Shanker. Visit the AFT web site (http://www.aft.org).

ADVERTISEMENT
LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Asian-American Legal Defense and Education Fund and the National Asian-Pacific Legal Consortium take no position on U.S. policy toward China. Some activists, of course, simply find American foreign policy irrelevant to the domestic agenda that drives them. But others seem uncomfortable with American pressure because they fear that a worsening U.S.-China relationship will fuel hostility toward Chinese-Americans. Gordon Chang, a Stanford historian, argues that the condition of Chinese-Americans is "very bound up with China's relationship with the U.S. When China has been isolated by the United States, Chinese-Americans have suffered."

Few suggest that Chinese-Americans today wield great influence over American policy toward China. But when the Committee of One Hundred announced last year that it backed unconditional MFN, soft-liners like Louisiana Senator Bennett Johnston, who had been appeasing China on human rights since before the Committee of One Hundred was even formed, rushed to host joint press conferences nonetheless. It was a useful illustration of the way in which participants in the high-stakes struggle over America's China policy will increasingly seek to enlist Chinese-Americans for their own advantage. And for Americans of Chinese ancestry it should serve as a warning: in a society that equates ethnic identity with moral authority, you are either a player or you are a fig leaf. •

The skies stay unfriendly.

HOT AIR

By Susan Ellingwood

Last summer, in an emotionally charged speech at New York's Kennedy Airport, President Clinton made a promise to the families and friends who lost loved ones when TWA Flight 800 mysteriously exploded. "We will require pre-flight inspections for any plane flying to or from the United States—every plane, every cabin, every cargo hold, every time," Clinton proclaimed.

In the frenzied days following the explosion, and in the middle of a presidential campaign, two separate commissions—one led by Vice President Al Gore and the other fashioned by the Federal Aviation Administration—were charged with making recommendations to improve airline safety and security. The two have done the job of one. The Gore Commission, which delivered its final report on February 12, and the Aviation Security Advisory Committee (ASAC), which weighed in two months earlier, both proposed ambitious new procedures aimed at protecting America's air travelers from terrorist threat. Today, as any frequent flyer can tell you, airport security consists of ritualized questions about who packed your bags, a request for photo identification and an x-ray of carry-on items. The new guidelines, however, would require deployment of powerful but cumbersome new bomb detection devices; implementation of a program to match bags to passengers that is meant to ensure no luggage is loaded on a plane without the passenger to whom it belongs; and development of an automated system that will screen passengers to look for those who fit the profile of a likely terrorist.

In short, the crash of TWA Flight 800, magnified by presidential politics, has given rise to a plan to significantly ratchet up the security apparatus at the nation's airports. It is not yet clear precisely which recommendations will be adopted. But there are three things that can be said with assurance: whatever program is adopted will cost travelers time and will cost both travelers and taxpayers money; whatever is adopted will not have much to do with Flight 800 (evidence increasingly suggests that mechanical failure, not terrorism, brought Flight 800 down); and whatever is adopted will not do much to deter serious terrorism.

Consider one of the major recommendations, the use of the new high-tech bomb detection machine recommended by the Gore Commission, the CTX 5000. In the course of the next year, fifty-four CTX 5000 scanners will be deployed, divided among the major airports. The machines cost a little over $1 million each, and about $100,000 per year, per airport, to maintain. Fifty-four CTX 5000s scattered around the country are enough to cause plenty of delays, but not nearly enough to stop mad bombers. The CTX machine scans bags at the relatively slow rate of 250 bags per hour; one or two machines at each major airport will therefore cause bottlenecks for passengers. But critics say that to really reduce the risk of terrorism it would require many, many more than fifty-four machines. According to Bob Monetti, a representative to the ASAC who has become somewhat of an expert in aviation security since losing his son Rick in the Pan Am Flight 103 bombing, the whole production and placement of the CTX 5000 is "really stupid. It will take two machines per gate, not per airport ... you need something like thirty to cover O'Hare alone."

Or consider the recommendation for a bag-passenger matching system. Carol Hallett, president and CEO of the Air Transport Association, claimed recently on "The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer" that since "one out of every seventy-one passengers" never makes his or her connecting flight, a bag-passenger match alone could cause major delays [and] scheduling problems that would cripple air travel. Israel's El Al Airlines demands a 100 percent match of bags to passengers for every flight. That makes El Al flights a lot safer, but it takes a great deal of time. As Tuvia W. Livneh, El Al's security chief from 1987 to 1993, explained to *The Washington Post*, to "search for one piece of luggage from one passenger who left the plane and to take it out of a 747 container ... will take you four hours, and here at El Al we will do it." A full bag-passenger match in the U.S. could con-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ceivably paralyze the entire air transportation system.

What is more, the bag-passenger matching system would do nothing to improve cargo and mail security. Nor would it guard against terrorists working, or passing, as airport employees. Mary Kay Hanke, a vice president for the Association of Flight Attendants, notes that there is a high rate of turnover among security contractors at airports and that, as a result, training and competence levels often vary from airport to airport and from year to year. And as George Pearson, president of TravelScan, a company that consults for airlines and airports, points out, "there are a lot easier ways [to get a bomb on the plane] than being a passenger. The physical control of access to the airplane when it's parked is really the problem." Many airline safety experts say that "ramp rats"—as airline workers call the people who handle the baggage and the food carts, fuel the plane and service the tanks—represent a greater danger than passengers. Steve Luckey, chairman of the National Security Committee of the Airline Pilots Association, counters that "any person in a secure area is supposed to have a security clearance." But, as Luckey acknowledges, there is no guarantee "that a terrorist can't get a job as a food cart carrier." The new recommendations for FBI background checks would probably catch some would-be terrorists, but no one thinks background checks would catch them all.

And, finally, consider the most popular of the recommendations, screening passengers against profiles of likely terrorists. Everyone acknowledges that this could mean significant violations of passengers' rights. But security experts say it could work—if U.S. airlines screened all of their passengers on every flight. Which is exactly what is not being proposed; instead, the commissions recommend screening "questionable" passengers, a strategy likely to single out Arab-Americans, among others, without guaranteeing greater safety.

On a cost-effective basis, the recommendations simply don't add up. Robert W. Hahn, in a sobering article in the libertarian magazine *Regulation* titled "THE COST OF ANTITERRORIST RHETORIC," provides a table that looks at the Gore Commission recommendations, the amount requested for each proposal and the projected costs. The Gore Commission estimates that its recommendations would cost $429.4 million. But, according to Hahn, that's too low. Hahn says that "a full passenger-bag match alone will cost $2 billion annually." Actuarial studies, Hahn notes, assume the "implicit value of life for air travelers" to be "between $5 and $15 million." Two billion dollars a year to guard against terrorism and sabotage—a threat which, Hahn notes, is responsible for a grand total of thirty-seven deaths in U.S. planes since 1982—works out to "a cost per life saved of well over $300 million."

The good news, if you want to call it that, is that neither commission's recommendations are likely to go anywhere. They are the leftovers from a terrorism scare that has, for the time being, ebbed, and a presidential campaign that is over. The truth is, there is not a whole lot that can be done to stop a trained professional terrorist. Terrorism will continue, and, in calmer moments, people will recognize that any attempt to stamp it out completely would impose such extraordinary costs and time delays as to destroy the airline industry altogether. The Gore Commission, as well as the ASAC, inaugurated with such fanfare, will likely see their recommendations disappear into archival history. And everything will settle down until the next explosion. •

Smaller than Guatemala, meaner than Serbia.

THE MYTH OF THE CHINA MARKET

By John Maggs

"We've got to be there," said Ron Brown as he led a delegation of American business leaders to China weeks after Bill Clinton's May 1994 about-face on Most Favored Nation status. "Hundreds of thousands of American workers are already depending on these jobs. China will be the engine for growth. It is the pot at the end of the rainbow."

JOHN MAGGS writes about international business and economics for *The Journal of Commerce.*

No, it isn't. China is not a major export market for the United States, nor is it likely to be one any time soon. There's more U.S. investment in the Philippines, and almost as much in the Dominican Republic. And the factors keeping U.S. money out of China show no signs of disappearing; many won't be affected by China's eventual submission to the rules of the World Trade Organization, either.

Call it the great China market myth—the idea that everything from human rights violations to weapons sales is worth enduring because glorious riches await us in the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

People's Republic. But this expectation is a chimera. U.S. exports to China were $11.9 billion in 1996. In Asia alone, China ranks behind Japan, South Korea, Taiwan and Singapore. Boosters insist that exports to China are growing so quickly that these comparisons are irrelevant. But in fact, since 1980, exports to China have risen about 10 percent annually, compared to an overall rise in U.S. exports of about 8 percent per year. Over the past decade and a half, U.S. exports to Brazil, Poland and dozens of other countries have grown faster than exports to China.

In 1996, China's economy grew at a torrid 9.7 percent, but, to the surprise of economists, American exports to China stayed virtually the same. The best explanation for this centers on another factor that mythologists of the China market don't like to mention. To advance internal economic and social goals, China's leaders continue to pull the levers of what remains a command economy. As in 1988, when inflation spun out of control, there's evidence that a 1996 inflation drive was built around the throttling of imports. Because of the large appreciation of the dollar last year, imports from the United States were the most expensive, and logically the best target.

China's intervention in trade markets goes far beyond the inflation crackdown. American companies say the greatest obstacle to imports is a vast and shifting network of administrative barriers that are manipulated by Chinese bureaucrats. "Trading rights" must be granted to importing companies; and U.S. companies are sometimes told their goods have been barred by secret laws known as "nebu" that they are not allowed to inspect.

U.S. businessmen concede that trade with China depends foremost on what its government decides is best. Joseph Gorman, chairman of auto-parts giant TRW, says he has been trying to sell power-steering equipment in China for years. TRW is the world leader in power steering—Volkswagen, in fact, uses TRW equipment in the cars it assembles in China. Still, "we haven't been able to sell or market there directly," said Gorman. "China has a very detailed plan for the auto sector, and that's pretty much the way it is going to develop."

Since most economists expect China's growth rate to slow, there's every reason to believe that U.S. exports will continue to hover at their 10-percent-a-year growth. This means that exports to China, now only 1.8 percent of total U.S. exports, will remain insignificant for at least a decade. More surprisingly, it also means that, over this decade, a number of Asian countries are likely to outpace China as markets for U.S. exports. In addition to South Korea, Taiwan and Singapore, Malaysia, too, will overtake China in the next two or three years. Thailand, where U.S. exports have been growing 20 percent a year, now imports half as much from the United States as China, but will overtake it early in the new century.

Many true believers in the China market argue that the United States will eventually get its share of imports because, unlike Japan, China has been running a net trade deficit with the world and will continue to do so. "The good news is that China can't keep growing without imports," said Richard Brecher of the U.S.-China Business Council. "They are going to have to run a trade deficit."

Not anymore. On January 10, China announced that its 1996 trade surplus with the world was $12.24 billion.

U.S. exports are the most important index of how the United States is benefiting from its economic relations with China. When Clinton talks about China meaning jobs for Americans, those jobs can only be measured in exports. But what about investment? China marketeers argue that, in that arena, there *has* been explosive growth for U.S. business. American companies, they say, are bringing home mega-profits from newly built factories in China.

Again, not nearly. The cumulative amount of U.S. direct investment in China edged up to $1.9 billion at the end of 1995, the last year on record, from $1.7 billion in the end of 1994. That's about 0.5 percent of the total, which is $170 billion. Colombia receives three times as much U.S. investment, despite a guerrilla insurgency, the threat of imminent U.S. sanctions for noncooperation on drug interdiction and an economy roughly one-tenth the size of China's. In defending free trade, Bill Clinton got laughs when he said that if low wages were the only factor, then U.S. investment would be flooding into the Dominican Republic. But U.S. direct investment in the tiny Dominican Republic was in fact $1.4 billion at last measure, not too far off from China's total. Some China boosters choose simply to disbelieve these statistics, which are compiled by the Commerce Department. "That's ridiculous," huffed Brecher, who faxed back a page of Chinese government data that was heavy on feel-good stats like "number of contracts signed." But even Beijing says the total U.S. investment is only $3 billion, a relative drop in the bucket.

While it's true that China is attracting more foreign investment than any other developing country, the overwhelming majority of that money continues to come from the three traditional sources for China's capital—Japan, Taiwan and Hong Kong. Beyond commonalities of language and culture, proximity is the most powerful factor driving investment patterns, and East Asia's geography will not change. Neither will the giant foreign reserves in these countries shrink very much, especially if they maintain their huge trade surpluses with the West.

Investment banker John Whitehead understands why U.S. investment in China remains so low. "There's a lot of activity lining up partners, but not a lot of money going in," he said. "China remains a relatively untried market and place to do business" for U.S. companies. Whitehead, a former chairman of Goldman, Sachs and deputy Secretary of State, borrowed Alan Greenspan's comment on the Wall Street bubble to describe an "irrational exuberance" among U.S. businessmen over China. Though Whitehead says he allies himself with Henry Kissinger, Alexander Haig and other "friends of China," he has no illusions about its business environment. "There is inherent instability in any dictatorial regime," he said. "In China, central authority is breaking down.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Regional leaders have a great deal of authority. There is no legal structure for protecting private property, and the financial structure is uncertain."

With few exceptions, the China deals that fill the newspapers are agreements in principle, years away from actual investment. Many never come off. That's what happened with the Lippo Group's investment, brokered by Clinton fund-raisers, to build a $1 billion power plant in China with Entergy Corp. Other deals seem to remain perpetually just around the corner. General Motors announced recently that it was in "final negotiations" for a $2 billion deal to build passenger cars with a Chinese partner in Shanghai. GM officials also announced this deal in October of 1995, and have been talking about it since 1993. A GM spokesman said there was no estimate of when ground would be broken on the plant.

Businessmen say that, in China, "the negotiation begins when the contract is signed." Chinese industrialists never stop demanding concessions, which often include the giveaway of valuable technology. For Chrysler Corporation, the price was too high. China demanded that the company turn over all its manufacturing technology and design secrets in exchange for being allowed to invest $1 billion in a minivan joint venture. "They want us to set them up as a world-class competitor to Chrysler, and pay for it, too," said chairman Robert Eaton.

McDonnell Douglas paid the price, then went out of business waiting for the China market to materialize. After agreeing to build twenty airliners in China, it couldn't sell one. The company was willing to play by China's rules, but then those rules changed: China's newly capitalistic airlines decided that Chinese-built planes would be of poorer quality than those made in Europe. McDonnell Douglas's inability to establish itself as an aircraft manufacturer in Asia was one of the major forces that drove it into its proposed merger with Boeing.

If the GM deal goes through, and GM officials are willing to part with the technology they bring with them to China, other restrictions will still limit the deal's value. In most developing countries, GM starts assembling cars almost entirely with parts manufactured elsewhere, mostly in the United States. Under China's auto development plan, Chinese-made parts will have to comprise 40 percent of the first cars that roll off the line in Shanghai. Within five years, the minimum "local content" will rise to 80 percent, ensuring that the engines, transmissions and other high-value components in these cars will not be exported from the United States. As for the fast-growing China market, auto analysts say that production capacity there will outstrip demand within three years. This suggests that GM and other U.S. companies will need to find other markets for these cars, further displacing exports from the United States.

Above all else, believers in the China market believe in the future. They believe the problems of today will surely disappear tomorrow. They believe that China is opening up to more imports when it is not. They believe that development will inevitably lead to greater fairness in the market when it has not.

Westerners have always seen what they want to see in China, beginning with Marco Polo. You don't have to be a protectionist or a Red-baiter to ask whether U.S. priorities in China have been skewed by this false image. If the United States recognizes that it has less to lose economically, perhaps balancing all its goals in China will be a little easier. •

How China bought the establishment.

CHINATOWN

By John B. Judis

"Much of the American foreign policy establishment, including three former secretaries of state and other former senior officials of both parties, turned a collective thumbs down yesterday on the Clinton administration's policy of linking trade with China to Beijing's human rights performance," *The Washington Post* reported on March 16, 1994. Anyone who read the *Post*'s account, which described a Council on Foreign Relations meeting chaired by former Secretaries of State Henry Kissinger, Cyrus Vance and Lawrence Eagleburger, would have come away knowing that a quorum of foreign policy luminaries had offered a grave indictment of U.S. China policy. What they wouldn't know was one particularly relevant fact about those luminaries: namely, that Kissinger, Vance and Eagleburger each have business ties to China. Kissinger is the founder of a firm, Kissinger Associates, which helps its corporate clients secure business in China; Vance is a corporate lawyer who chaperones clients seeking outlets in China; and Eagleburger, once the president of Kissinger Associates, now works for a Washington law firm where he has also

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

helped businessmen secure contracts in China.

Yet this gathering was not in the least unusual. Increasingly, many of our most distinguished and, in theory, disinterested, experts on U.S. China policy are selling their reputations and knowledge to clients with very particular business interests in China. Almost every prominent former government official who speaks out on this subject has direct or indirect financial ties to China. Most of them are Republicans, because a Republican administration first re-established ties with China in 1972, and because Republicans controlled the White House for most of the next twenty years. Besides Kissinger and Eagleburger, they include: former Secretaries of State Alexander Haig and George Shultz, former Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney, former National Security Adviser Brent Scowcroft, former U.S. Trade Representatives Carla Hills and Bill Brock, and former Senate Majority Leader Howard Baker. But Democrats have also gotten in on the China game. Besides Vance, there is, for example, former Secretaries of State Edmund Muskie and Warren Christopher, former Ambassador to China Leonard Woodcock, former U.S. Trade Representative Robert Strauss and former Senator Gary Hart.

Unlike the ex-officials who have lobbied for Japan and Japanese corporations, these former officials don't work directly for China or for Chinese businesses, and most have no personal investments in China. The relationship is more subtle and indirect. They are employed by, or serve as, lawyers, advisers or consultants to American companies that have invested, or want to invest, in China. Some, like Kissinger, Hills, Scowcroft and Haig, are high-priced consultants who run their own firms. Others, like Cheney, formerly a director of Morgan Stanley and now the chairman of Halliburton Oil, and Shultz, a director of Bechtel, work for the businesses they seek to help. And still others, like Vance and Howard Baker, are senior or managing partners in law firms that represent companies with an interest in China. What all of them have to offer is not so much knowledge of China as clout with its government—clout based in part on the statements they have made about U.S. policy toward China.

American businesses use these former officials to gain access to high Chinese officials who would otherwise be reluctant to entertain visits from businessmen or bankers. Explains Roger Sullivan, the former president of the National Council for U.S.-China Trade, "The Chinese have all the traditional views toward business. It's crass, lower-class. Higher-level officials don't like businessmen that much. You have to have someone else with you if you want to see them." James Lilley, who was ambassador to China in the Bush administration and is now a professor at the University of Maryland, concurs. "There is a standard procedure that, if you want to do business in China and get the contracts, you have to have someone to open doors, and people who were in prominent positions are often very good door openers."

But having been friendly toward China while in office is not enough to guarantee access, even for the most exalted former officials. They must also be seen as ongoing friends and defenders of China's rulers. Explains Lilley, "If you want to deal in China, you will sing their tune. This can take a number of forms. It can take the form of bringing congressional visitors over, it can take the form of an op-ed piece in *The New York Times*, it can take the form of a speech, it can take the form of lobbying Congress. There are many, many ways you can influence things."

The pressure to make favorable statements about China mounts as a visit nears, or as contracts are under consideration. Even when a delegation arrives, the Chinese will often keep them in suspense about how high-ranking an official they'll get to see. Says Sullivan, "It is always put to you that here is your schedule, and at such and such a date you are going to see a high-level official, but they won't tell you who it is going to be." When a former American official—whatever his motive—gives a speech denouncing those who want to tie trade with China to human rights, he is enhancing his ability to open doors at the highest levels in China. If he gives a speech denouncing Chinese policies, he is likely to find himself shunted off to the provinces, taking tea with some minor functionary.

The classic new China hand is, of course, Kissinger. Kissinger has won access to China's markets for a number of his firm's clients. In 1995, for instance, he helped GTE sign a memorandum with China's United Telecommunications Corporation to jointly develop China's massive telecommunications system. At the same time, he is the Chinese government's most prestigious defender. In 1987, at the behest of China's ambassador to the U.S., Kissinger even founded his own lobby, the American China Society, which he ran out of Kissinger Associates. Most recently, he is credited with weaning House Speaker Newt Gingrich from his support for Taiwan—in July 1995, Kissinger called Gingrich after the Speaker advocated recognizing Taiwan as an independent nation—and with persuading the Clinton administration to decouple trade from human rights.

Other former statesmen have followed closely in his footsteps. The most egregious example is probably Haig, who was Kissinger's aide during the opening of China in 1971-72. After resigning from the Reagan administration as Secretary of State in 1982, Haig established Worldwide Associates, a Washington consulting group. One of his main clients has been United Technologies, of which he is a former chief operating officer and president. Haig has helped the Connecticut conglomerate win billions of dollars in contracts in China for everything from airplanes to air conditioners.

Haig has maintained his access to high Chinese officials through unflagging defense of their actions. Sullivan calls him the "classic patsy of the Chinese." In October 1989, for instance, four months after Chinese troops crushed pro-democracy demonstrators, Haig was the only prominent American to join Deng Xiaoping in Tiananmen Square for the celebration of the fortieth anniversary of the People's Republic. Lilley and the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ambassadors from Japan and Western Europe boycotted the celebration, as did American businessmen. Afterwards, Deng praised Haig for his "courage." Haig has also consistently opposed any American policy that displeases the Chinese. Last year, he even criticized then-U.S. Trade Representative Mickey Kantor for trying to crack down on Chinese software piracy. "I think Mr. Kantor lets domestic American politics play too heavy a sway in his outspoken criticism of our trading partners, whether it be in Tokyo or Beijing," Haig declared.

Haig has also done his bit in Washington. Last year, he called Representative Christopher Cox and other Republican congressmen to demand they back Most Favored Nation trading status (MFN) for China. Haig berated Cox for opposing MFN and championing Taiwan, prompting Cox to inquire with the House office whether Haig was a registered lobbyist. He's not. When I interviewed Haig, I wanted to ask him why, but I never got that far. My first question—whether there was any problem with having business interests in China while making public pronouncements on U.S. China policy—made him too indignant. "I don't see any conflict there at all. I have business dealings all over the world, including my own country, and I don't think that deprives me of the ability to make judgments on international affairs, which I spent a good part of my life involved in. Who has planted these nasty questions in your craw?" When I tried to rephrase the question, he hung up on me.

DRAWING BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

Haig is revered by China's leaders, but disliked and even scorned in Washington, particularly by Republicans who remember his trying to take charge after the Reagan assassination attempt. Scowcroft, by contrast, is widely respected in both Beijing and Washington, though the former national security adviser has mixed public policy pronouncements on China with private business just as freely. Scowcroft, like Eagleburger, also served as president of Kissinger Associates before joining the Bush administration. After leaving the White House, he founded the Scowcroft Group, to consult for businesses, and a nonprofit policy group, the Forum for International Policy, which operates out of the same suite of K Street offices. Like Haig and Kissinger, he helped clients win contracts in China. Last October, for instance, he helped secure a meeting between Chinese Premier Li Peng and Dean O'Hare, the chairman of the Chubb insurance company.

And Scowcroft, too, defends China against its critics. Last year, he gave speeches and briefings on China and MFN at the Heritage Foundation for Republican House members. His Forum for International Policy faxed "issue briefs" on China to congressional offices. Some of these briefs seemed to betray the same sort of "blame America first" logic that old Leftists used to resort to when they spoke of the Soviet Union. In one, published on June 12 last year, Scowcroft and former Bush State Department official Arnold Kanter blamed the U.S. for Chinese sales of nuclear technology to Pakistan, arguing that "an accretion of nonproliferation legislation" had led us into strategic blunders.

Though other members of the informal China lobby are more discreet than Kissinger, Haig and Scowcroft, they, too, get themselves into situations in which they appear to be abusing their roles as members of the foreign policy establishment. One such incident involving former Defense Secretary Cheney stirred the wrath of some of his fellow Republicans on Capitol Hill. In February 1995, the Chinese Navy entered the waters around the disputed Spratly Islands and erected structures on Mischief Reef, which is also claimed by the Philippines. Philippine President Fidel Ramos ordered the Philippine Navy to the area, and the Philippine ambassador complained to Washington.

In March, Cheney, who had joined the board of directors of Morgan Stanley, visited China with representatives from the bank and secured meetings with high-ranking Chinese officials, including Defense Minister Chi Haotian. In Beijing on March 10, after three days of meetings, Cheney told Xinhua News Agency, "I do not really per-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ceive any threat from China to the world or to the region." After leaving China, Cheney attended a business meeting in Singapore, where he made further public statements suggesting that he believed the Philippines had no cause for concern. According to Reuters, Cheney said he did not think China had embarked upon a "hostile course" in the area. Afterwards, one Republican China expert on Capitol Hill told me, "Cheney's statement [on Mischief Reef] was very mischievous. Saying China is not a threat sent a message to Southeast Asian countries who were backing the Philippines that major parts of the U.S. establishment weren't going along." In the months after Cheney's visit, the People's Construction Bank of China, a joint venture between the government and Morgan Stanley, announced a major expansion of its services.

Kissinger, Haig, Scowcroft, Cheney, Hills, Vance and Shultz stand atop a pyramid of numerous former officials who are involved in U.S. China policy and who share the same conflict of interest. Kanter and former NSC staff member Eric Melby work for Scowcroft. Former USTR official Erin Endean works for Carla Hills at Hills & Co. in Washington, D.C., where she advises firms about investing in China. In January 1996, former Clinton Commerce Department official David Rothkopf joined Kissinger Associates as its managing director. As Ron Brown's deputy undersecretary for international trade, Rothkopf had supervised Deputy Assistant Secretary John Huang.

These lower-ranking officials don't have the same influence on Capitol Hill as Kissinger or Scowcroft, but they can function more plausibly as impartial experts, particularly for the media. The same reporters who would hesitate before quoting Kissinger or Haig as impartial experts on China are happy to rely on Rothkopf or Kanter. Last November, for example, *Business Week* blithely invoked Rothkopf's expert opinion about the "importance of cultivating the relationship with China." In August, Reuters, citing Rothkopf's opinion that China should be made "a full member of the global trading system," left out his affiliation with Kissinger Associates, identifying him only as a former Commerce Department official.

Rothkopf or Kanter can argue that their opinions are independent of their employers, but the Chinese don't see it that way. The Chinese government closely monitors what researchers and policy wonks in this country say and write about China. One head of a policy group, who didn't want his name or organization revealed for fear of further reprisal, told me what happened when one of his researchers, writing in an obscure academic journal, described China's trade policy as "mercantilist." The Chinese Embassy in Washington immediately protested to the businesses that funded the policy group.

Until now, the new China hands and their minions have had the best of both worlds. Not only have they gained contracts for their clients; they have shaped opinion in Washington, too. Says one aide to a Republican congressman, "They are respected voices on foreign affairs. Congress is especially susceptible to authoritative statements from Kissinger and Vance because so few members have any experience or knowledge about foreign affairs. Between [Richard] Armey, [Thomas] DeLay and [John] Boehner, you've got zero knowledge of foreign affairs." A Senate Republican aide who has advocated a harder line toward China told a similar story. "I can deal with the Motorolas of the world," he said. "The problem I have is the George Shultzes, where these guys show up and they are not directly on the payroll. You get overwhelmed as a staff guy. You get a discussion going, and then someone gets a call from Scowcroft and he is off the reservation again."

And the work of the former officials nicely complements that of the corporate lobbyists. While the lobbyists appeal to the politicians' instincts for electoral survival, the former officials seem to offer an intellectual rationale for obeying those instincts. Explained one House aide, "I have been in meetings and heard members say that they have to vote for MFN, but they need some way to cover their own rear ends. That just tells me right there, they are not making the vote on any intellectual or moral grounds. They are making the vote because of their campaigns. The role of Scowcroft or Kissinger is to provide cover."

But in the long run, the new China hands' success may prove to be the country's failure. Some of the policies they promote may have been justifiable on their merits. It made a certain sense for the Clinton administration not to base its trade negotiations on China's human rights record. But many of the former officials have not simply argued for pursuing negotiations on different tracks, but for virtually abandoning any effort to influence either China's highly protectionist trade policies—at the root of last year's record $39.5 billion deficit—or its support for tyranny at home and abroad. They identify the interests of American corporations abroad with the interests of Americans at home, many of whom could see their jobs shifted from Seattle to Shanghai. They overlook the fact that China could pose a far greater threat to international security than rogue states like North Korea or Iraq. And, as they did in Iran, they cast America's lot with an unpopular autocracy.

Perhaps more important, the new China hands could have a corrosive effect on American democracy. In foreign policy debates, average Americans, as well as many of their political representatives, often defer to prominent former officials whom they believe speak disinterestedly for the national interest. When the public becomes aware that they are also speaking for the interests of their business clients, the cynicism about how important policy decisions are made will deepen. This, together with revelations about the Clinton Commerce Department and presidential campaign, and a growing anxiety about the role of money, especially foreign money, in American politics, could precipitate a crisis of political confidence as profound as that caused by Watergate. Those who understand what has happened to the foreign policy establishment can't conceal their concern. Says Lilley, "Who are the real objective observers? It's like Diogenes looking for an honest man. It is very, very hard to find one." •

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Between Beijing and business, the fix is in.

THE BETRAYAL OF HONG KONG

By Stan Sesser

On a recent afternoon in Hong Kong at the Fringe Café, an art gallery and artists' hangout in the center of the city, a political cartoonist named Zunzi drew a sketch in my notebook. The sketch showed a smiling man wearing a dog costume, about to pick up a dog's head and put it on. The man, Zunzi explained to me, represents one of the wealthy Hong Kong businessmen who do the bidding of China by participating in the groups—the Preparatory Committee, the Selection Committee, the Provisional Legislature—that are paving the way for China's July 1 takeover of the British colony. The point of Zunzi's cartoon was that these bodies share many of the same members, and these members are dog-like lackeys to Beijing who perform obediently wherever they serve, merely adopting new identities—new dogs' heads—as they go from one group to another.

Zunzi faces a perilous future, and he knows this. A cartoonist who draws powerful businessmen as dogs—worse, who draws, as Zunzi did last year, the leaders of China as retarded children—will not attract many smiles from the men who will rule the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR) of the People's Republic of China. But, so far, Zunzi has been lucky. His newspaper, *Ming Pao*, is one of the few Hong Kong publications that have resisted the trend toward self-censorship. Some of his cartoonist friends, he says, have already lost their jobs and emigrated to Canada.

But Zunzi, an intense, soft-spoken man with graying hair and a sparse goatee, who asks to be referred to only by his pen name, isn't about to join them overseas. "Hong Kong holds too much sentiment for me," he says. "I think I could tolerate it if no one gives me a job here. I could work to earn something to eat, and in my spare time do something for democracy in Hong Kong." When I asked Zunzi about the possibility that he and other democracy advocates would end up in a Chinese jail, he looked down at the table. "If they put me in jail for no more than ten years, I can tolerate it," he said, quietly.

The Asian Wall Street Journal, in a recent special section devoted to Hong Kong's transition, referred to China's guarantee of "the right of exercising national regional autonomy under the unified leadership of the Central People's Government." But this pledge had nothing to do with Hong Kong. It was given, as the article pointed out, in 1951, when China took over Tibet. "Beijing's archives are packed with firmly worded documents assuring people in various corners of its empire an autonomy that, in every case, atrophied over time, if it ever existed at all," the *Journal* noted.

Hong Kong is shaping up as the next sad case in point. The territory has been given its guarantees, just as Tibet was. These guarantees are embodied in the Joint Declaration of 1984, under which Britain agreed to turn over Hong Kong to the Chinese in 1997. For 140 years, China had tolerated the presence of Hong Kong on its border, even though the territory had come under British rule as a result of the ignominious settlement of the first Opium War. Then, in the Joint Declaration, Beijing granted a series of extraordinary concessions for a peaceful return of the colony, giving Hong Kong freedoms that were unknown under the Communist government on the mainland. With the Chinese speaking of "one country, two systems" for a period of fifty years, the Joint Declaration promised that "the current social and economic systems in Hong Kong will remain unchanged, and so will the lifestyle. Rights and freedoms, including those of the person, of speech, of the press, of assembly, of association, of travel, of movement, of correspondence, of strike, of choice of occupation, of academic research and of religious beliefs will be ensured by law." The Bar Association of the City of New York's Committee on International Human Rights called these concessions "perhaps unprecedented for a government recovering sovereignty over a formerly colonial territory."

Today, eight years after Tiananmen Square, with the Communist Party losing its legitimacy and the rulers of China uncertain about their grip on power, the freedoms promised by the Joint Declaration are already beginning to look as empty as the words about Tibet. Emboldened by the United States' open embrace of trade concerns over democracy and human rights, and seeing no particular reason to wait until July, Beijing has already gone a long way toward destroying what democ-

STAN SESSER, a former staff writer for *The New Yorker* covering Southeast Asia, is senior fellow of the Human Rights Center, the University of California at Berkeley.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

racy there was in Hong Kong, and it shows every intention of finishing the job. (The new U.S. policy will be reflected in Secretary of State Madeleine Albright's visit to Beijing on February 24: bring up human rights in discussions, but don't threaten any sort of action.) Because the current legislature was elected under the democratic reforms of Governor Christopher Patten, Beijing ordered it disbanded as of July 1, 1997, replacing it with a Provisional Legislature that will rubber-stamp China's dictates. It is already clear that the Provisional Legislature will serve as the mainland's enforcer against democracy. The legislature is about to scrap several provisions of the British-introduced Bill of Rights. It also is on the verge of passing a measure that would require police permission to demonstrate, and would insist that all political groups register with the government. The legislature will also pass a subversion law, establishing legal grounds for the possible imprisonment of Hong Kong dissidents, making it a crime to advocate independence for Taiwan or Tibet, and very likely outlawing criticism of any Chinese leaders.

An additional step in establishing a rubber-stamp rule was taken last fall, when Beijing's handpicked Selection Committee staged what was called an election to designate shipping tycoon Tung Chee-hwa as the Hong Kong SAR's first chief executive. Tung's failing business had been bailed out by China in the early 1980s, and within twenty minutes of his designation as chief executive, the stock of his family company soared in value by approximately $31 million. Not surprisingly, he has since delivered a series of hard-line statements on human rights issues.

In all of this, Beijing has found little resistance—indeed, much support—among the only people in Hong Kong powerful enough to even contemplate an effective stand for democracy and civil liberties, the business class. Almost all the leading businessmen have scurried to gain favor from China, and some have denounced democracy in the process. Newspapers, magazines and television increasingly avoid or downplay controversial stories. An education official talks about censoring textbooks, and universities show signs of putting a lid on dissent. Clerical workers for the Democratic Party, which swept the 1995 legislative elections, find they can't get new jobs.

In Hong Kong, the fix is in, and the nature of the fix is clear and grim. The men who are in the business of dictating business will not get in the way of the men who are in the business of simply dictating, and vice versa. Hong Kong will retain its economic freedom and its businesses will continue to prosper, since such a policy serves China's interest, and since the leading Hong Kong tycoons long ago cast their lot with Beijing. But the rights and liberties gained over the years by Hong Kong's roughly 6 million citizens will erode or vanish. Only one major question remains for the post-July 1 Hong Kong: Will Beijing be satisfied with its victory, or will it be vindictive enough to sweep away the remaining fighters for democracy like Zunzi, to squelch every vestige of dissent as it has in China itself?

Nellie Fong is brilliant and elegant, a Chinese woman who has made it in a man's world. One moment she speaks with authority about political issues, the next she shows off her brushstroke paintings, which adorn the walls of her office. For twenty-three years Fong has worked for an American company, as a deputy managing partner of the multinational accounting firm Arthur Andersen. But her British education and Western orientation haven't stood in the way of her enthusiastic backing of Beijing. "I never set foot in China until 1978," she says in perfect, British-accented English. "I saw the Chinese government accepting the fact that we have different backgrounds and different views. I saw them accepting our background and our thoughts. I feel their commitment to wanting the best for Hong Kong, to listening to us." Since 1995, Fong has served as chairwoman of the executive committee of the Better Hong Kong Foundation, an organization fueled by several million dollars from leading Hong Kong tycoons to soothe fears about the territory's handover.

As it happens, Martin Lee, the legislator who heads the Democratic Party and provides the most powerful and articulate defense of Hong Kong's freedoms, is Nellie Fong's brother-in-law. I read Fong a year-old passage from *The Far Eastern Economic Review* describing Lee's "recurring nightmare that haunts both the activist and the advocate in him. It is that he will be arrested by the People's Liberation Army stationed in Hong Kong after 1997 and sent to Beijing for trial as a counter-revolutionary." Fong's voice rose in indignation. "Rubbish, rubbish. Martin Lee hasn't even set foot in China since 1989. He doesn't know what goes on in China. People don't get dragged off to prison. He says this to scare people. He uses those tactics overseas to have an impact."

I raised the case of the dissident Wang Dan, a student leader at Tiananmen Square who has already served a four-year term in prison and has since been given an additional eleven years for writing articles criticizing the Chinese government. Didn't Wang's story challenge her view that people in China don't get dragged off to prison? "Wang Dan has not been dragged off to prison," Fong insisted. "He's been tried and sent to prison. We in Western society might not agree that he committed a crime, or about the severity of the sentence, but he wasn't kidnapped."

To hear such words from a person as Westernized as Nellie Fong makes dramatically clear the degree to which Hong Kong's business community is embracing China—notwithstanding the fact that Hong Kong's fortunes have been made under the protection of the strict rule of law and the relative absence of corruption, two characteristics that hardly distinguish business dealings across the border. I asked John Kamm, an American business consultant in Hong Kong who made headlines several years ago by successfully intervening with Beijing on behalf of dissidents, how broadly the embrace extends. "Small businessmen, small trading companies, doctors, lawyers—in those ranks you'll find some standing up for human rights," he said. "But when you get to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

revenues over $5 million a year, I don't know of anyone." Kamm said his personal experience supports his thesis. "I was president of the American Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong in 1990, and I went to Congress and testified that we would lobby Beijing to free political prisoners. In 1991, when I stood down, I was blackballed. Interviews given by the new leadership dismissed what I was doing. They told the Chinese that I don't speak for any segment of the community."

The attitude of Hong Kong's business community extends far beyond attempting to make the best of an inevitable event. A visitor to Hong Kong sees not resignation, but euphoria. The Hong Kong stock market has soared to new heights, and property values are skyrocketing to a level that recalls Tokyo in the 1980s—the price of a 1,000-square-foot viewless apartment in a middling neighborhood has surpassed $1 million. "Like Camelot, every day will be a fine day," Martin Lee derisively put it to me. The brazen confidence can be seen in the fate of the Hilton Hotel. In late 1994, the hotel reopened after a $14 million face-lift. Six months later, Li Ka-shing, one of the richest men in Hong Kong, decided to tear it down, figuring he could make more money constructing an office building.

"What's there to talk about?" asks David Chu, in the conference room of a modest suite of offices that belies his wealth. "Everything's perfect. I said this five years ago, when people were predicting this would be an empty city. Now they're fighting to come back to live and work, but they can't afford to buy back the house they sold when they left for Canada." Chu gestures at a wall lined with photographs of office buildings. "I made all these investments and everything went up three times."

Chu used to be an American; he moved to Boston at age 14 after his parents fled Shanghai, and he graduated from Harvard. But, in 1994, he turned in his passport and gave up his American citizenship as a demonstration of allegiance to China. "We admit we have a few people without rights," he says. "But the quality of life is much improved, the best in the history of China. It is in China's interest to leave Hong Kong as is. Half of Hong Kong is owned by China—don't forget that."

Chu is at least partly right. China's interest is not in leaving all of Hong Kong as is, but in leaving as is that part of Hong Kong that devotes itself to making money. As the economic playing field changes, tilting from Britain to China, billions of dollars are flowing to Chinese companies, many of them government- or army-owned. British companies are selling out at bargain-basement prices. Last April, for instance, the venerable British trading house Swire sold, at an undervalued price, a majority share of its airline, Cathay Pacific, to Citic Pacific, China's main investment company in Hong Kong.

Unlike the territory's 6 million citizens, Hong Kong-based corporations have little to risk from the handover, since China's approximately 1 billion people are the target market for Hong Kong companies and since, it has been said, 80 percent of the colony's manufacturing activity has already moved across the border. But just in case, as David Newman points out, business leaders are taking no chances. Newman, a senior lecturer at Hong Kong's Lingnan College and co-author of the critical study "Red Flag Over Hong Kong," told me that the number of companies trading on the Hong Kong Stock Exchange that are legally domiciled in Hong Kong fell from 96 percent in 1984 to under 40 percent today. "Companies are seeking legal protection by incorporating offshore," he says. "The money has already fled."

The business class further palliates itself with assurances that, despite the initial signs, Beijing rule will work out well even for civil liberties, with little Chinese interference in Hong Kong affairs. Their reasoning goes like this: Hong Kong business needs a free and open society, governed by the rule of law and permitting instant access to information, in order to operate successfully. China would be hurting itself by restricting liberties and allowing corruption to seep from across the border, because the geese laying the golden eggs would simply pick up and fly away.

But if this is so, why has Beijing already moved so determinedly against human rights, terminating Hong Kong's democratically elected legislature and scrapping or cutting back many laws guaranteeing basic rights?

The answer is that Beijing knows that Hong Kong's businesses don't really mind a crackdown on democracy, and so will not be inclined to fly away in the event of one. While democracy holds a plus for business in allowing the unimpeded flow of information, it can also create demands to take from the rich to finance public services. Worse, democracy is, well, democratic. Hong Kong's business elite fears a true democracy, because a socially progressive party like Martin Lee's Democrats could come to power. What Hong Kong's merchant princes really want is a society modeled on Singapore, which represses civil liberties but extends every liberty to business. To keep its population docile, the Singaporean government bans every sort of protest, won't allow labor unions to strike and holds the opposition to a few seats in the legislature. It has also created a dual system of information, unlimited for corporations, but restricted for ordinary Singaporeans, who can't own satellite dishes and must channel their Internet correspondence through a government computer that weeds out unwelcome web sites. The newly appointed chief executive for Hong Kong SAR, Tung Chee-hwa, is open in his admiration of the Singapore model.

Miron Mushkat, managing director and chief economist of Lehman Brothers in Hong Kong, a man known for his frank and penetrating analysis, is one of the few businessmen in Hong Kong willing to address this issue head-on. "In the fifteen years I've been here," he told me, "Hong Kong has evolved from a business-dominated society to one more balanced. Now there's a substantial middle class, with greater demand for participation in the political process. I would argue that the business community has not entirely welcomed this trend.

"There's a concern about democracy," Mushkat concluded. "More authoritarianism would be seen as more conducive to prosperity and stability. And China has

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

been sending positive signals to the business community, reassuring signals." I asked him about the corruption that will inevitably cross the border from China along with the authoritarianism. "Corruption is an implicit tax," he replied. "Providing it's transparent and not excessive, business can live with it. Other taxes in Hong Kong are low."

Edgar Yuen, the 38-year-old deputy chief editor of *The Hong Kong Commercial Daily*, a newspaper controlled by the Chinese government, is a native Hong Kong resident who has always supported China. While many other Hong Kongers are grateful to Britain for introducing democracy, albeit belatedly, Yuen sees another side to the British. "I admit they brought an efficient government, but that's all," he says. To Yuen, Patten's reforms were designed "to cause a lot of trouble. When we look at all the British colonies—India, Pakistan, Singapore—before they retreat they would cause trouble. They're trying to prove it's good when they're there, and bad when they're out."

It's hard to believe after meeting Yuen that, from China's perspective, his newspaper isn't already in good hands. Yet China recently installed three of its own people in top positions at the *Commercial Daily*, a paper that was previously staffed entirely by Hong Kongers; two were sent from the Office of News and Information in Beijing and the third from Xinhua, the Chinese press agency.

And the Hong Kong media have gotten the message. The press today is filled with flattering stories about the transition, and articles about the new chief executive Tung so worshipful that they border on servility. Even the respected Hong Kong-based *Far Eastern Economic Review*, owned by Dow Jones & Co., has joined in. When Tung, Chinese president Jiang Zemin's choice for the post, was rubber-stamped by Beijing's 400-member Selection Committee with a huge red-curtain backdrop—a scene that resembled a Communist Party plenum at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing—columnist and senior editor Frank Ching wrote under the headline "A MILESTONE FOR HONG KONG": "The entire exercise of producing the first chief executive has been heartening." He conceded only that the process was not "totally democratic."

Self-censorship by the media is "getting much more difficult to monitor," says Daisy Li, an assignment editor of *Ming Pao*, former chairperson of the Hong Kong Journalists Association and a relentless fighter for press freedom. "They're doing it more cleverly. If you kill a story at the idea stage, the action is much less visible." Speaking of the anniversary date of Tiananmen Square, she adds, "Journalists say their editors think that even the mention of June 4 is too sensitive. This year the number of demonstrators on June 4 picked up; it was quite significant news. The largest Chinese-circulation newspaper, the *Oriental Daily News*, put it on the bottom-right corner of an inside page. It's owned by a Hong Kong businessman whose father defected from China to Taiwan. He was regarded as pro-Taiwan, but now he's switched to pro-China."

China has two choices in media management after July 1. The least controversial would be to let the remaining handful of outspoken publications wither financially, since few companies would be willing to incur Beijing's wrath by advertising in a newspaper critical of it. This is a strategy familiar to Beijing, which, Li says, issued a blacklist after Tiananmen Square forbidding Chinese companies from advertising in certain Hong Kong newspapers and magazines. But such a strategy runs a risk. "They're worried that the concept of press freedom will infiltrate into China," Li notes. "After July 1, if Hong Kong can freely report on China and criticize Chinese officials, reporters inside China will ask why they can't do the same."

More likely, statements coming from Beijing indicate, China will quickly institute formal censorship of the Hong Kong media. In an interview with *Asian Wall Street Journal* reporters last October, Chinese Foreign Minister Qian Qichen stated that the Hong Kong media "can put forward criticism, but not rumors or lies. Nor can they put forward personal attacks on the Chinese leaders." A Beijing-run newspaper in Hong Kong put the issue this way: "Press freedom will only be a worry for those holding biased or hostile views."

The media's self-policing is indicative of a larger trend. All over Hong Kong, institutions are running for cover long before they receive any marching orders. With no hope of meaningful international support, Hong Kongers are coming to realize that they must either knuckle under or become martyrs. And given China's record in the treatment of dissidents, martyrdom is a very serious decision indeed.

One example of the new era of caution came last September, when Lingnan College sponsored two international conferences on its campus dealing with the Hong Kong transition. David Newman, who has written critically of China's policies, was conspicuously not invited to speak at the conference. "One of the conference organizers went through the building asking everyone if they wanted to participate, and he never stopped at my door," Newman recalls. "I've published two books on the subject; my new book was reviewed in *Time* and *The Far Eastern Economic Review*, and I wasn't invited." Newman sees an exodus of the Western faculty who have contributed substantially to the reputations of Hong Kong's nine colleges and universities. "For foreigners, tenure is no protection, because we need a renewal of our working papers every two years," he says. "Increasingly, universities are looking for mainland Chinese trained in the West, or for overseas Chinese, who have the Chinese values of deference and obedience."

Hong Kong's freewheeling arts community is also changing. In a city with but one real culture, that of making money, many artists must rely on the beneficence of corporations. "No intelligent businessman will sponsor an exhibition that might agitate the Chinese, or be in any way provocative," says Oscar Ho, the exhibition director of the Hong Kong Arts Center and himself an artist. "I feel this is here already, although the potential

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sponsor won't say so. They'll make all sorts of excuses for not giving money."

Although Ho is a strong-willed man, he has found to his dismay that he has already begun to censor himself. "I had an exhibition last September," he explains, "surveying how artists define China in their work. I felt an ethical problem: some of the artists had no sense of politics, and here I am as curator putting them on a political platform. Do I have a right to do this in view of July 1? So I toned it down, and it ended up so watered down that I felt it failed to communicate anything. I don't mind my being political, but what about my staff? There could be collective punishment of everyone involved with the institution."

Hong Kong has frequent democracy demonstrations, well-planned, noisy, with impressive orators like legislators Martin Lee and Emily Lau. But they're generally small affairs, lost in a city so overcrowded that it's sometimes difficult to find enough space to walk down a sidewalk. The night before the anointment of Tung as chief executive, a group of demonstrators met in a park near the Star Ferry terminal and marched to the Hong Kong Convention Center, where the "fake election," as they called it, would take place. No more than sixty demonstrators showed up, surrounded by a horde of media that at times threatened to outnumber them. And the protesters were mainly middle-aged and middle-class.

The paucity of demonstrators, and the fact that the democratic reforms of the last decade came from the volition of Governor Patten and not from any upswell of public pressure, might lead to the conclusion that Hong Kongers are indifferent to their political fate. Such a conclusion would be misleading. The residents of Hong Kong—a tiny speck on the map surrounded by a country that is periodically wracked by convulsions—are, not surprisingly, cautious. But when aroused by a particularly egregious act by China, they can pour out into the streets. The Tiananmen massacre spurred up to 1 million Hong Kong residents to protest, and perhaps led Chinese leaders to rethink the guarantees they had offered in the Joint Declaration.

And when given the chance to vote, Hong Kong's support of democracy is unequivocal. In the 1995 elections, Hong Kong voters had the chance to choose twenty of the sixty legislators directly by universal suffrage. The pro-Beijing party, the Democratic Alliance for the Betterment of Hong Kong (DAB), ran a slick, Western-style campaign. But Martin Lee's Democrats swept twelve of the twenty seats; although the DAB represented Hong Kong's new rulers, who would take over in less than two years, they won only two seats, and got just 16 percent of the vote.

This was not the sort of election that Beijing had in mind. Gary Cheng Kai-nam, a DAB official, said in a radio interview that "Hong Kong people will pay for this." That payment was extracted in March 1996, when the 150-member Preparatory Committee, a body handpicked by Beijing to handle transition matters, voted 149 to 1 to abolish the legislature on the day of the handover, even though its members will have served only two years of their four-year term. The one dissenter, a community worker named Frederick Fung, was then barred from serving on the Selection Committee to choose the chief executive, and from membership in the Provisional Legislature that will officially begin operations on July 1.

Last December, fresh from choosing the chief executive, the Selection Committee met in Shenzhen, just across the border from Hong Kong, to pick the Provisional Legislature. Most of the 130 candidates were members of the Selection Committee itself. Governor Patten, calling the process "a bizarre farce," noted that "over a million people in Hong Kong voted for the present Legislative Council, and up over the border now, 400 people—400 people—are voting. Four hundred people voting for each other. This procedure was stomach-turning." One of the winners was the same Gary Cheng Kai-nam of the DAB who had lost the previous year. *The New York Times* reported: "Asked what he would say to voters who rejected him in 1995 but had no say in the selection this time, Cheng said: 'I would tell them that it is now a very different game.' "

A very different game. Last December, shortly after Tung Chee-hwa's selection, I visited Martin Lee. Sitting behind a gray metal desk in his sparsely furnished legislative office, wearing a navy blue pinstriped suit and speaking very British English, Lee looked more like a London barrister than the subversive that Beijing is likely to label him. I asked him what the choice of Tung portended. "Fact one," he said. "C.H. Tung is their man. Fact two, an appointed legislature will be set up in nine days' time by the same 400 people. If you look at the 400, you won't find five who are democratic, even if you stretch it to the limit. Mr. Tung and the legislature will not be accountable to the Hong Kong people. They will do what Beijing wants them to do. Our laws will be changed. The first casualty will be the Bill of Rights Ordinance, the most important law ever passed in Hong Kong. It enshrines all our freedoms. It gives power to our courts to strike down any law contrary to our Bill of Rights. Beijing wants it repealed. Then, no matter how repressive a law the legislature passes, the courts can't strike it down. The most independent judge in the world can do nothing, particularly now that we will have a subversion law. Why should Hong Kong not have political prisoners? We all prepare for the worst while we keep hoping for the best."

Much of what Lee predicted has already come to pass, and it has been for the worse. At the beginning of this month, the Preparatory Committee turned up in Beijing to endorse China's plan to reinstate the old colonial laws restricting civil liberties, laws that Britain had put on the books in the 1960s to repress the pro-Red China left. This is the plan that also calls for repealing sections of the 1991 Bill of Rights Ordinance that Patten pushed through, for requiring police permission to demonstrate and for registering all new groups with the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

government. These recommendations will soon go to the Provisional Legislature, which will, of course, approve them.

But the key weapon in China's legal arsenal is likely not to be a British colonial law, but Article 23 of the Basic Law of 1990. The Basic Law was China's attempt to codify the Joint Declaration into a mini-constitution for Hong Kong. Like the Joint Declaration, it has high-sounding language guaranteeing Hong Kong's way of life. But Article 23 requires the SAR legislature to enact laws against "secession" and "subversion"—the very "crimes" under which China prosecutes dissidents like Wang Dan. In testimony before Congress last summer, Sidney Jones, executive director of Human Rights Watch/Asia, noted that "in China, subversion, or counterrevolutionary activity, is defined so broadly as to include criticisms of the one-party system or calls for workers' rights. It is likely that China will extend such broad interpretation to Hong Kong, since it has already labeled pro-democracy groups and activists such as Martin Lee and Szeto Wah as subversive elements."

And the case of Martin Lee himself perhaps best symbolizes the extent to which Beijing has already gotten what it wants from Hong Kong. Less than two years ago, Lee headed the party that scored a historic triumph, by sweeping an election that gave Hong Kong voters their first big taste of democracy. Today he is marginalized, his party left with little more than the power to protest—a right that itself may soon be taken away. When Lee spoke in Australia last November, Prime Minister John Howard said he was "too busy" to see him—reportedly because Howard feared upsetting China. But Lee still races through each day, granting dozens of interviews with journalists—1,000 last year, he estimates—and traveling around the world pleading the cause of democracy in Hong Kong. (Next month he will do a lecture tour in the United States.) I asked him why he worked so hard against such formidable odds. "I believe the battle for Hong Kong cannot be fought and won if the world is not behind us," he replied. "Otherwise we become another Tibet."

Probably few events at Tiananmen Square proved more traumatic for the leaders of China than the arrival of Han Dongfang. Han, a railway maintenance worker, came to rally workers to the cause of democracy, and at Tiananmen he set up the first autonomous workers' organization in China since 1949. For the government, dealing with rebellious students—who could be passed off as a privileged elite representing only a tiny portion of the Chinese people—was one thing; dealing with rebellious workers would be quite another. A month after Tiananmen, Han found himself in prison.

I met Han last December at a Hong Kong hotel to hear the story of his most unusual odyssey. Han is a tall, pleasant-looking man with a brush cut, who carries himself in such a dignified manner that he seems almost aristocratic; it's hard to envision him laboring on a railroad. He speaks English slowly with absolute precision, interrupting himself constantly to ask whether he has chosen the correct word.

"When I arrived in prison," he began, "they put me in a room just fourteen square meters with twenty other people, and all of them had tuberculosis. Many were coughing blood twenty-four hours a day. Before they had sent me to this room, they told me that now I would understand how to cooperate. By the beginning of 1991, I was dying of TB. When they questioned me, I couldn't speak, and I needed help to eat. One day I asked for paper and wrote that if you want to finish your questioning, you'll have to send me to a hospital." At the hospital, the doctors were unable to help Han. To keep him from becoming a martyr, the Chinese government released him in April 1991. Nine months later, sponsored by Human Rights Watch, he came to New York for medical treatment. Doctors discovered a drug-resistant form of TB, and had to remove his right lung.

Finally restored to health, Han determined to get back to China so that he could carry on his work. In October 1993, leaving his wife and first child in the U.S., he went to Hong Kong. A week later he found what he was looking for: a border crossing without a computer. "I went to the border by boat, and there was just one policeman," he says. "He didn't even look at my passport, but just stamped it. I went to Guangzhou [Canton], and a friend suggested staying at a big hotel so that I could get an air ticket to Beijing quickly. I was in China already, so I felt relaxed. But the next morning, before 6 a.m., there was a knock on the door. Ten policemen stood in the hall, and other policemen had blocked every exit and stairway.

"They told me I was officially expelled," Han continued. "I laughed. 'Show me a law; who has the power to expel a Chinese citizen from his own country?' They took me to the border at Shenzhen and literally threw me onto the bridge between Shenzhen and Hong Kong. I told the Hong Kong police I didn't want any protection; I wanted to go back."

Since that incident, Han has tried two more times to return to China, once making it as far as the door of a Dragonair plane. He refuses to apply for a Hong Kong visa extension, so the head of immigration sends him one every month.

Now, in one of the great ironies of the transition, on July 1 Han will at long last find himself in China once again. "I will be a symbol," he says. "I will have gone back to China successfully." He has no idea what fate awaits him. "What will they do with cases like me?" he wonders.

I asked Han what had gone wrong from the high-sounding promises of 1984, the pledge of "one country, two systems." "What did they mean by two systems?" he responded. "They talked about Hong Kong being able to continue horse racing. They looked at Hong Kong's capitalism as things like horse racing and dancing. But after June 4, 1989, with the huge demonstrations in Hong Kong, they realized there was something more important for the people of Hong Kong. The people wanted freedom and democracy." •

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE HARD QUESTIONS

Bad bet

Political corruption comes in two forms. Most familiar is the hand-in-the-till variety: bribes, payoffs, influence-peddling, lobbyists lining the pockets of public officials in exchange for access and favors. This corruption thrives in secrecy, and is usually condemned when exposed.

But another kind of corruption arises, by degree, in full public view. It involves no theft or fraud, but rather a change in the habits of citizens, a turning away from public responsibilities. This second, civic corruption, is more insidious than the first. It violates no law, but enervates the spirit on which good laws depend. And by the time it becomes apparent, the new habits may be too pervasive to reverse.

Consider the most fateful change in public finance since the income tax: the rampant proliferation of state lotteries. Illegal in every state for most of the century, lotteries have suddenly become the fastest-growing source of state revenue. In 1970, two states ran lotteries; today, thirty-seven states and the District of Columbia run them. Nationwide, lottery sales exceed $34 billion a year, up from $9 billion in 1985.

The traditional objection to lotteries is that gambling is a vice. This objection has lost force in recent decades, partly because notions of sin have changed but also because Americans are more reluctant than they once were to legislate morality. Even people who find gambling morally objectionable shy away from banning it on that ground alone, absent some harmful effect on society as a whole.

Freed from the traditional, paternalistic objections to gambling, proponents of state lotteries advance three seemingly attractive arguments: first, lotteries are a painless way of raising revenue for important public services without raising taxes; unlike taxes, lotteries are a matter of choice, not coercion. Second, they are a popular form of entertainment. Third, they generate business for the retail outlets that sell lottery tickets (such as convenience stores, gas stations and supermarkets) and for the advertising firms and media outlets that promote them.

What, then, is wrong with state-run lotteries? For one thing, they rely, hypocritically, on a residual moral disapproval of gambling that their defenders officially reject. State lotteries generate enormous profits because they are monopolies, and they are monopolies because privately operated numbers games are prohibited, on traditional moral grounds. (In Las Vegas, where casinos compete with one another, the slot machines and blackjack tables pay out around 90 percent of their take in winnings. State lotteries, being monopolies, only pay out about 50 percent.) Libertarian defenders of state lotteries can't have it both ways. If a lottery is, like dry cleaning, a morally legitimate business, then why should it not be open to private enterprise? If a lottery is, like prostitution, a morally objectionable business, then why should the state be engaged in it?

Lottery defenders usually reply that people should be free to decide the moral status of gambling for themselves. No one is forced to play, they point out, and those who object can simply abstain. To those troubled by the thought that the state derives revenue from sin, advocates reply that government often imposes "sin taxes" on products (like liquor and tobacco) that many regard as undesirable. Lotteries are better than taxes, the argument goes, because they are wholly voluntary, a matter of choice.

But the actual conduct of lotteries departs sharply from this laissez-faire ideal. States do not simply provide their citizens the opportunity to gamble; they actively promote and encourage them to do so. The nearly $400 million spent on lottery advertising each year puts lotteries among the largest advertisers in the country. If lotteries are a form of "sin tax," they are the only kind in which the state spends huge sums to encourage its citizens to commit the sin.

Not surprisingly, lotteries direct their most aggressive advertising at their best customers—the working class, minorities and the poor. A billboard touting the Illinois lottery in a Chicago ghetto declared, "This could be your ticket out." Ads often evoke the fantasy of winning the big jackpot and never having to work again. Lottery advertising floods the airwaves around the first of each month, when Social Security and welfare payments swell the checking accounts of recipients. In sharp contrast to most other government amenities (say, police protection), lottery ticket outlets saturate poor and blue-collar neighborhoods and offer less service to affluent ones.

Massachusetts, with the highest grossing per capita lottery sales in the country, offers stark evidence of the blue-collar bias. A recent series in *The Boston Globe* found that Chelsea, one of the poorest towns in the state, has one lottery agent for every 363 residents; upscale Wellesley, by contrast, has one agent for every 3,063 residents. In Massachusetts, as elsewhere, this "painless" alternative to taxation is a sharply regressive way of raising revenue. Residents of Chelsea spent a staggering $915 per capita on lottery tickets last year, almost 8 percent of their income. Residents of Lincoln, an affluent suburb, spent only $30 per person, one-tenth of 1 percent of their income.

For growing numbers of people, playing the lottery is not the free, voluntary choice its promoters claim. Instant games such as scratch tickets and Keno (a video numbers game with drawings every five minutes), now the biggest moneymakers for the lottery, are a leading cause of compulsive gambling, rivaling casinos and racetracks. Swelling the ranks of Gamblers Anonymous are lottery addicts, like the man who scratched $1,500 worth of tickets per day, exhausted his retirement savings and ran up debt on eleven credit cards.

Meanwhile, the state has grown as addicted to the lottery as its problem gamblers. Lottery proceeds now account for 13 percent of state revenues in Massachusetts, making radical change all but unthinkable. No politician, however troubled by the lottery's harmful effects, would dare raise taxes or cut spending sufficiently to offset the revenue the lottery brings in.

With states hooked on the money, they have no choice but to continue to bombard their citizens, especially the most vulnerable ones, with a message at odds with the ethic of work, sacrifice and moral responsibility that sustains democratic life. This civic corruption is the gravest harm that lotteries bring. It degrades the public realm by casting the government as the purveyor of a perverse civic education. To keep the money flowing, state governments across America must now use their authority and influence not to cultivate civic virtue but to peddle false hope. They must persuade their citizens that with a little luck they can escape the world of work to which only misfortune consigns them.

MICHAEL J. SANDEL

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Madeleine Albright and Jewish Identity

The Power of Myth

Heinrich Heine called baptism the entrance ticket to European culture, but it did not gain him entrance. He had hoped his conversion to Christianity in 1825 would lead to a government job, but no one ever offered one. A century later, the great satirist Kurt Tucholsky wrote, shortly before committing suicide: "I left Judaism in 1915 [or thereabouts] not realizing that this simply cannot be done." In the nineteenth century, the number of European Jews who converted ran into the tens of thousands, and this group included many in the Jewish elite: such figures of the German Jewish establishment as the Berlin Mendelssohns, and many of the Sefardi families of Britain. The best known Montefiore now alive is a bishop, and who but a few experts knows that the Bernals were originally Jewish?

But Tucholsky's assertion that one cannot really opt out was still greatly exaggerated. The story of my great-granduncle Boris may serve as an illustration. He was born Moritz, a Jew. He left his Silesian village around 1815, studied medicine, settled in Russia, converted and changed his first name in the process. Moritz became Boris. Owing to a stroke of good fortune—he was called to sign the death certificate when Tsar Alexander I died—he became a nobleman. His children and grandchildren married into the nobility. He numbered among his descendants such luminaries as a government minister and a commander of the Black Sea fleet. When asked about his antecedents, Boris was always vague; yes, he had come from Silesia, yes, his parents had been decent but poor people. The fact that they had been Jewish seemed too unimportant to mention. His children and grandchildren greatly embellished the story. Thus, a mythical French nobleman originating in central France who had somehow been transplanted to Russia became the progenitor from whom the whole clan hailed. By about 1900, this was the universally accepted version. When, in 1980, I published an article trying to separate fact from fiction, surviving members of the Russian family reacted angrily against what they genuinely thought to be a slander. I failed to understand this great sensitivity. After all, I figured, the Russian nobility in its majority is certainly not Russian, but Polish, German and Tatar by origin. By the end, even the Romanovs had little Russian blood left in their veins.

Why did granduncle Boris convert, why did so many others? To a considerable extent, the motives were eminently practical: to a Jew who had not been baptized, many careers were as yet closed at the beginning of the nineteenth century. But this was by no means the only motive, and patriotic Jewish historians dismissing converts as mere opportunists, devoid of character and self-esteem, are often far from the mark. As the walls of the ghettos came down and emancipation began, the attraction of traditional Judaism diminished: on the one side there was humanist European culture, on the other an ossified religion, most of it consisting of what seemed empty ritual. The rabbis who had excommunicated Spinoza (and who now object to naming a street after him in Israel) were still at work, obscurantists, vehemently opposed to any change.

What could Judaism offer an educated European Jew as an incentive to convince him to remain a Jew, if he did not happen to be an early Zionist or religious? Filial piety perhaps, but this was a limited inducement. What was the point of accusing converts of treason or desertion, for how could one betray a heritage in which one did not believe in the first place? The attitude of Orthodox Judaism toward the converted was itself contradictory (and still is, a fact that has caused endless problems in the Supreme Court in Israel). According to Jewish law it was (and is) technically impossible to leave the faith—"even if he has sinned he remains of Israel." On the other hand, converted Jews were regarded as having died; the prayers of mourning had to be said for them.

After the First World War, the political and social situation changed for European Jews, for better and for immeasurably worse. Few careers were still barred to them, but anti-Semitism became more pronounced in some countries. Jews began to think of conversion as an escape, although they should have known that conversions did not count as far as the racialists were concerned—as many Hungarian Jews discovered when they flocked to the churches in a desperate attempt to save themselves after the German invasion in 1944. But conversion to save one's life lent a certain disreputability to the act. After Hitler came to power in 1933, and the threat that Nazism posed to Jews became more and more clear, many Jews—even Jews who had little to do with Judaism—began to consider conversion morally reprehensible and aesthetically displeasing. It was not right to desert in a time of siege.

The climate in Czechoslovakia, where Madeleine Albright's family lived, was not as bad for Jews as it was in most places in Central Europe at mid-century. Anti-Semitism was certainly not an issue in the political life of the first Czech Republic; there are more villages, squares, streets and gardens in Israel named in memory of Tomáš Masaryk, the founder and first president of Czechoslovakia, than in any other country, including Masaryk's own. Jews could be found among the active members of all political parties, and some of them, such as Ludwig Czech, became government ministers. In fact, the main ideologists of the second generation of the Clerical Party were Pavel Tigrid and Ivo Duchacek, both born Jews. Tigrid, who became a government minister after the fall of Communism, had been named Schonfeld. There had been similar name changes, but the motivation had been patriotic rather than escapist—many Jews had lived in the Sudeten region or in Galicia and their German names seemed slightly inappropriate in the new climate of Czech independence. But this was not obligatory; a man could still be named Goldsticker and become a Czech diplomat (admittedly after 1945), and the leader of the Czech Communists, an international figure of some renown, was, after all, called Gottwald. But the first Republic, too, had its share of Kamil Hoffmanns, a diplomat stationed in Berlin, and to the best of our knowledge they were not discriminated against.

Un-Jewish Jews, that is to say nonbelievers, sometimes left the Jewish community; these were usually, though not always, people of the far left, but they generally did not join one of the Christian churches. Still, there were anomalies. Zemanek, the chief conductor of the brass orchestra of the Israeli army in the early days, was a Jew. But was he? The Zemaneks, hailing from Hradec Kralove (better known as Koenigraetz), had originally been a Protestant family, but at the time of the Counter-Reformation, facing dire consequences unless they became Catholics, they opted for a compromise—converting to Judaism, which was a feasible alternative at the time. Having grown up in the borderland between Germany and its Slavonic neighbors, I know from personal experience that the search for ethnic and racial origins in Central Europe is not a rewarding task. Many early protagonists of Panslavism had German names, Polish generals in World War II were called Rommel and German-Blaskowitcz, and the forward line of Schalke 04, the German soccer championship team during the 1930s, read like an excerpt from the Warsaw telephone directory. To summarize, Jews in the Czech lands were fully emancipated, and there was less anti-Semitism there, politically and socially, than in Britain and France.

Individuals have converted from one religion to another since time immemo-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

rial; sometimes these conversions were forced, but in our age they have usually been voluntary and personal, decisions of limited public interest. Some, like Cardinal Lustiger of Paris, have made no secret of their origins, which would have been difficult in any case. He even speaks Yiddish when the occasion arises. Others, like Uncle Boris in 1815 (not to mention some more recent examples), have made extraordinary efforts, sometimes successfully, to obliterate their traces. This was understandable 200 years ago because the motive for conversion was usually to get away from a disabling heritage and to escape reminders of the past. In our age, one would expect a little less secrecy and self-consciousness, but conditioned reflexes, as Pavlov taught us, persist for a long time. Or is it that, having prepared (or having been bequeathed) a certain legend about their origins, converts find it embarrassing to change it? These, then, are the mysteries of the human heart; perhaps it is best not to try to delve into them too deeply, especially from afar.

WALTER LAQUEUR

WALTER LAQUEUR is author most recently of *Fascism* (Oxford University Press) and *Fin de Siècle* (Transaction), a collection of essays.

Human Condition

I do not know what I think about Madeleine Albright's Jewish problem, and I am not inclined to judge her. Nor am I especially inclined to judge her parents, although her characterization of them as "brave" does seem a little generous. They became Catholics after the family was safe in England, and even the loyal daughter does not claim that they embraced the Church as a result of some spiritual epiphany. Their channel crossing to London was not, then, in the line of Paul's way to Damascus. More likely, the conversion of the Korbels was of the sort common in the history of the Jews from the beginning of the Enlightenment: not a result of coercion or of death threat, as during the Inquisition, but a deliberate act of separation, perhaps borne of social convenience. These were thoroughly secularized people, people for whom rituals of faith were perhaps no more than props in the falsified drama they wanted their children to believe. And believe it they did: first by suspending natural inquisitiveness, and then by what I imagine were ever more desperate tactics of denial. If, for example, Mrs. Albright's grandparents had died natural deaths, and not in the showers of Theresienstadt and Auschwitz, where were their graves?

Denial is a part of Jewish history going back to the fourth century before Jesus. At that time there were the Hellenizers, and they won adherents even in Palestine. Closer to our time, in Central Europe, there were other models, real converts. There was Mendelssohn, who wrote church music as celestial as Bach's. And Heine, who remained a Jew in spite of his conversion. To the end of his life, he was torn by his decision: "My brain is full of madness," he wrote only days before his death, "and my heart is full of sorrow." In England, there was the convert Disraeli who dreamt of the vindication of the Jews. He wrote his own Zionist novel, *Tancred*, a prelude perhaps to George Eliot's Zionist novel, *Daniel Deronda*, whose discovery of his lost Jewish ancestry is a bildungsroman in and of itself.

From such episodes is constructed the Jewish romance of specialness. But true Jewish history is the history of the Korbels, the history of the ordinary. There are now so few Jews in the world not just because, over the centuries, many millions of them were murdered but also because many millions of them tiptoed away from Judaism.

But our new Secretary of State, as existentially American as she has become, seems not to understand that in our country very little onus attaches to Jews and to Jewishness. Her spinning of her past was, therefore, pointless. Why could she not have simply said, when asked, "yes, although I am not a Jew myself, I descend from Jews." Like Barry Goldwater and Michael Blumenthal and Caspar Weinberger and James Schlesinger and Robert Mossbacher and God only knows how many other good Christians. The Jews would not have claimed her, as we did not claim Caspar Weinberger. And the gentiles would not have disdained her. No one would have cared much at all. Now, however, some Arabs are saying about Albright, as they have the right to, "we knew she was Jewish all along." And some gentiles must be asking themselves: Why does she seem so embarrassed?

But how Mrs. Albright feels about her natality is not an idle question. Hannah Arendt wrote in *The Human Condition* that "natality may be the central category of political thought.... Action and speech are so closely related because the primordial and specifically human act must ... contain the answer to the question asked of every newcomer: Who are you?"

There are some Jews who are really furious with her. But my impression is that these are mostly Jews whose own ties to Judaism and Jewishness are fragile. They cannot tell the difference between kiddush and kaddish, between the blessing over wine and the prayer for the dead. Jews so precariously identified are threatened by how porous the lines are. One day you can be a Jew, and the next day nothing. Or an Episcopalian. And why, for that matter, not a Native American? Such identity is no ballast, and it is not comforting. It is also easily threatened.

I don't mean to be haughty, but nothing threatens my Jewish identity, certainly not the denial of Mrs. Albright's parents, and not crèches in public places, either. Ever since I was a kid, and the Holocaust notwithstanding, I've always thought of being Jewish as a piece of good fortune, even a kick in some respects. It is understandable that Madeleine Albright does not have this feeling—although many in our generation (Albright's and mine) do, and many, many more in the next. As a college student, in a course in the history of ideas, I read Arthur O. Lovejoy's *The Great Chain of Being*, a book with hardly a Jewish thought in it. But I took the title phrase to my own purpose. I know I stand in the great chain that stretches from the covenant with Abraham and the revelation at Sinai to the unknowable future, and I have tried to teach my children that they are of this chain, as well.

I am not a Holocaust Jew. I do not dwell on what the Nazis did to the Jews, although I know that the indifference of the world allowed them to do it. But the Holocaust will not go away. I have been pondering a book—one does not really read it—that is five pounds in weight, 2,000 pages, with some 2,500 photographs. The book, by Serge Klarsfeld, was assembled as a piece of what the French call *témoignage*, and it is called *French Children of the Holocaust* (New York University Press). It is raw, in its way, pitiless. The reader will get no relief from its pages, and certainly no pleasure. But here in the photographs of fully a quarter of the 11,000 French Jewish children deported to their deaths by Vichy and its German overlords, a small fraction of the more than 1 million Jewish children murdered in Europe, and in the stark detail of the convoys that transported them, the reader will be face to face with history, brutal and revealing. Here are the dead: a naked infant in his bassinet, three sisters on the beach, a boy with a ball, a boy wearing the yellow star, a girl with a doll, a girl with her friend, on and on, sameness and difference. A teenager, Marcel Chetovy, scratched into a wall in the camp at Drancy his hopes to return home soon, which he did not. Unrelenting, this book rivets one's attention ... and follows one in sleep.

The parents of little Madeleine Korbel must have in some way envisioned the fate of children like Marcel Chetovy for their own children, and they did what they thought they needed to, to protect their beloved. Who can blame them?

MARTIN PERETZ

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

BOOKS & The Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

State of Affairs

A man named Oliver Edwards appears a couple of times in Boswell's *Life of Johnson.* At one point Edwards says he knows that Johnson is a philosopher and adds: "I have tried too in my time to be a philosopher, but, I don't know how, cheerfulness was always breaking in." Taking Edwards's terms as given, I, too, try to be a philosopher about current American film; but for me, too, cheerfulness keeps breaking in.

Just look at these films by new American directors in the last twelve months: *Flirting with Disaster, Manny & Lo, Walking and Talking, Sling Blade.* Some real cheer there. And now there's still another ray of light, **The Daytrippers** (Cinepix). Greg Mottola, who wrote and directed, is bright, funny, seemingly casual. His first film has some of the larky yet perceptive quality of the French New Wave.

His subject is familiar, as is the device by which it's introduced, yet their very familiarity gives Mottola the chance to flirt and dance with them. A young suburban wife has a husband who works in a Manhattan publishing house. One day she discovers accidentally a passionate note from a lover, apparently to her husband. ("Oh Lord," we think. "Again?") She does something unpredictable. Instead of carrying on one way or another, she takes the note to her parents, who live nearby with her unmarried younger sister. Sister's boyfriend is also present. All four try to reassure her: the note is misleading, it's someone else's note, etc. But all five of them pile into the parents' clonky car and drive into Manhattan to see the husband and sort the matter out. The familial expedition is a novelty in this situation—and promises amusement.

Of course it strains belief a bit, but that's one of Mottola's chief modes. He gets fun out of unlikely actions plunked into the middle of veristic procedure. He keeps up that contrast between realism and caprice all during the film: a slightly bizarre call at the publishing office where they learn that the husband is out; Mom's fainting spell in the street that leads to lunch in a stranger's apartment; the young wife's offer of help to a woman loading her car that leads somewhere else; and so on. The family's daylong search for the facts behind the note leads to a discovery that will no longer be a shock to us but nonetheless shocks them. And at the end Mottola again upsets neatness by leaving matters unsettled, like an unresolved open chord.

After the freehand *esprit,* character is Mottola's main concern. The only two people who don't deepen in the course of the day are Ma and Pa—stock lower-middle-class types who are played quite conventionally by Anne Meara and Pat McNamara. The young wife, who sees further into her marriage and herself, is done pleasantly by Hope Davis. Stanley Tucci, as her husband, is smooth but explodes when explosion is needed. Parker Posey is very credibly quirky as Davis's sister, and Liev Schreiber strikes all the right witty-sad notes as her boyfriend. Campbell Scott is more interesting than usual as a novelist on the loose, and Marcia Gay Harden slashes in a mod cartoon as a lovelorn woman at a party.

Mottola's dialogue proves—right from the start as Tucci and Davis drive home after dinner at her parents' house—that he has a fresh view of the diurnal, which means that he takes his diction from life, not from previous scripts. His directing, if not extraordinary, is straightforward, clean. The general tone of the picture, in the shapes of scenes as well as their contents, might be called "Seinfeld"-cool. All the younger characters—the characters, not the people who play them—have roles in today's urban society and are obsessed with a fear of letting their roles drag, of becoming square. The only times they abandon their roles are when something drastic cracks them open. Mottola doesn't merely surf along on these attitudes; he empathizes and comments.

Anyway, cheerfulness breaks in—for a while, at least.

One of the most beautiful women I've ever seen, on screen or stage or anywhere, is in **Kama Sutra** (Trimark). Her name is Indira Varma, and she has the leading role in this tale of sixteenth-century India. She plays a young woman who would like to become the bride of the local king. Instead, he chooses a friend of hers, and Varma becomes his chief courtesan. The film is bathed in golden light and voluptuous *luxe* by the camera of Declan Quinn, who, contrastingly enough, shot *Vanya on 42nd Street*; and through all this shimmer and

FILMS WORTH SEEING

Hamlet. *Kenneth Branagh "directs" a bit too much, but his good performance and the superb ones of several others give line and power to it all. (Reviewed 1/27/97)* **Prisoner of the Mountains.** *From Russia. This modernization of a Tolstoi story set near Chechnya has vigor and color, and it realizes the author's spiritual theme. (2/24/97)* **Sling Blade.** *Written and directed by Billy Bob Thornton, who plays the leading role. Fine, sober, moving. After twenty-five years in an Arkansas mental hospital, a man tries to rejoin society. (2/10/97)* **Troublesome Creek: A Midwestern.** *Jeanne Jordan and her husband, Steven Ascher, documentary makers, record a momentous transition in the lives of Jordan's Iowa farming family. Engrossing. Quietly important. (2/17/97)*—**SK**

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

shadow floats the exquisite Varma.

The director was Mira Nair, who co-wrote the screenplay with Helena Kriel. Nair first appeared here with *Salaam Bombay*, a ruthless exposé of Bombay vice today, and now, after *Mississippi Masala* and *The Perez Family*, she returns to India, to the situation of women in India's past. To be a wife or courtesan, we are shown, were the two options. It's Jane Austen, strenuously straitened.

Whatever the young woman chooses or is chosen for, she is taught to dance—exquisite dancing to delicate music—and is educated through the *Kama Sutra*. We are told often that Vatsyayana's book is more than a sex manual, it is a philosophy of love. Still, Varma's teacher, played by a maturely beautiful woman known widely but simply as Rekha, looks at her one day and says, "You have the makings of a great courtesan," as the highest praise she can give.

Varma manages to beguile in a script that is jagged, bumpy, sometimes silly. In revenge on the chosen bride, Varma steals into the king's boudoir the night before the wedding and seduces him, yet later she says she didn't mean any harm. After Varma joins the king's harem, she meets a young sculptor who falls in love with her and is jealous of the king. She consoles the sculptor: "I'm only his courtesan, that's all." Somehow this explanation doesn't satisfy the young man.

Kama Sutra (the title means *Love Lessons*) is like a pageant passing by—no narrative conviction, just one gorgeous moment after another. Nair may have begun the film as a statement about the history of Indian women, but it ends as a lush, erotic exploitation of them. (It had its premiere in India only recently, with the frontal nudity excised.)

Book Note. Future historians of American culture will value such books as Vincent Sherman's autobiography. **Studio Affairs: My Life as a Film Director** (University Press of Kentucky, 328 pp., $24.95) is a nitty-gritty chronicle of Sherman's career in the last decades of Hollywood's so-called Golden Age. Now 90, Sherman, who was born Abe Orovitz in Georgia, came to New York in 1926 to be an actor. With a change of name, some luck and a lot of persistence, he got theater work. In 1933, he was summoned to the coast. John Barrymore was making a film of Elmer Rice's play *Counsellor at Law*, and Rice had recommended Sherman for the part that the young man had done in the Chicago company. After returning to the New York theater, and after some dizzy experiences with the alcoholic Sinclair Lewis while Lewis was writing a play, Sherman found himself in Hollywood again. Soon he was signed by Warner's to a bargain-basement three-way contract as an actor-writer-director.

The acting element quickly disappeared. He collaborated on some screenplays in 1938-39, then directed his first film in December of 1939 and kept on, at various studios, until 1961. (TV work followed.) During those twenty-two years he directed, among many others, Bette Davis and Miriam Hopkins (*Old Acquaintance*), Clark Gable (*Lone Star*), Humphrey Bogart (*All Through the Night*), Errol Flynn (*The Adventures of Don Juan*), Ronald Reagan (*The Hasty Heart*), Rita Hayworth (*Affair in Trinidad*), Joan Crawford (*Harriet Craig*) and Paul Newman (*The Young Philadelphians*). With Davis, Crawford and Hayworth he had affairs of differing duration. In some measure he treats these affairs as part of his career (see the book's title), and his wife apparently viewed them the same way.

Among Sherman's better-remembered films are *Mr. Skeffington* (Davis and Claude Rains) and *The Hard Way* (Ida Lupino). Whichever of his films retain future interest, his book will provide a firsthand account of a hectic Hollywood that demanded of its personnel a shrewd commercial instinct, assiduously developed craft and a sense that, underneath the business bustle, they were dealing, however distanced, with an art. •

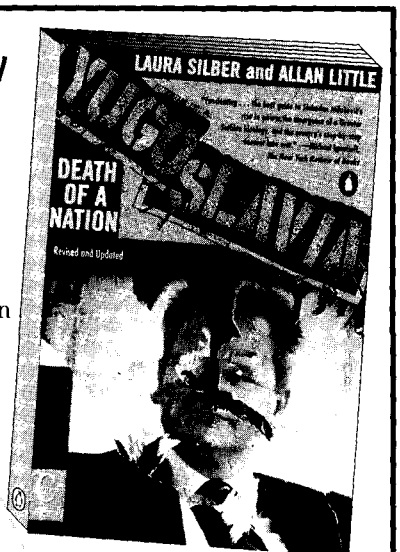
"A masterpiece of contemporary political writing."

—Misha Glenny, author of *The Fall of Yugoslavia*

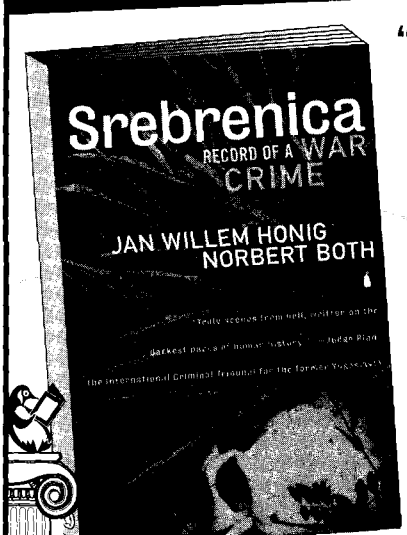
Drawing upon eyewitness testimony, scrupulous research, and hundreds of interviews, this analysis of the Yugoslavian civil war provides unprecedented access to the facts behind the media stories.

"The most authoritative account in English or any other language about how the war began."

— The Washington Post Book World



TWO HARROWING ACCOUNTS OF THE DEVASTATION OF WAR



"Dramatic, wrenching, and horrific... it details the final battle for Srebrenica and the murder of its men, attempts to explain why the Bosnian Serbs committed such a horrific act of genocide, and analyzes why the international community sleep-walked into disaster."

— William Shawcross

"Truly scenes from hell, written on the darkest pages of human history." —Judge Riad, *the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia*

IN BOOKSTORES NOW FROM PENGUIN

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

How a slaveholder and ideologue was also a great democrat.

Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Thomas Jefferson

By Sean Wilentz

I.

Especially during his troubled second administration, Thomas Jefferson received a lot of hate mail. "You have sat aside and trampled on our most dearest rights bought by the blood of our ancesters [sic]," one angry correspondent snarled at the height of the embargo crisis in 1808. Another letter began, "THOMAS JEFFERSON, You infernal villain," and still another saluted the president as "You red-headed son of a bitch." Jefferson affixed his own laconic endorsements to these messages ("abusive," "bitter enough") and then quietly filed them away; but he could not hide his growing annoyance. "They are almost universally the productions of the most ill-tempered & rascally part of the country, often evidently written from tavern scenes of drunkenness," he wrote angrily to his Secretary of State, James Madison (who was also a target of poison pen letters).

Were he alive today, Jefferson would probably regard modern American historians as a rascally bunch. To be sure, he remains a sainted figure to millions of ordinary Americans, as the author of the Declaration of Independence; and in American popular culture, to judge from Ken Burns's commendable PBS film *Thomas Jefferson*, his nobility is secure. But Jefferson has been subjected to intense scholarly attack over the past thirty years, more so than any other Founding Father.

In 1963, the legal historian Leonard Levy heavily damaged Jefferson's reputation as a civil libertarian by describing how, as president, he tolerated the suppression of opposition editors with selective prosecutions for seditious libel. Soon afterward several leading historians, including Winthrop Jordan, David Brion Davis and Edmund Morgan, challenged the authenticity of Jefferson's anti-slavery professions and dwelled on his disparaging writings about blacks. Conservative and radical scholars have been discovering common anti-Jefferson ground on issues ranging from Indian removal to the Haitian Revolution, and they have adopted an increasingly acidulous tone. Whereas pro-Hamiltonians such as Forrest McDonald denounce Jefferson as a "wild-eyed political quack," left-leaning historians such as Michael Zuckerman describe him as "the foremost racist of his era in America." And now Conor Cruise O'Brien, attacking from the left and the right simultaneously, has written a book that links Jefferson's legacy to the Ku Klux Klan, Pol Pot, Hendrik Verwoerd and the right-wing militia movement in contemporary America.

To a certain extent, all these vicissitudes of reputation are just the familiar academic boom-and-bust cycle. Undervalued by historians in the nineteenth century (when pro-Federalist New Englanders dominated the field), Jefferson enjoyed a scholarly revival in the 1920s and 1930s, when he was celebrated as a liberal champion of the Enlightenment and a patron saint of democratic reform. The dedication of the Jefferson Memorial in Washington, D.C., in 1943, presided over by President Franklin D. Roosevelt, signaled Jefferson's enduring stature in the public mind; and thereafter a series of scholarly monuments, above all Dumas Malone's admiring six-volume biography, which appeared between 1948 and 1981, ratified Jefferson's greatness inside the nation's history departments. In recent years, inevitably, there has been a corrective, anti-Jefferson reaction. But this alone cannot explain the shrillness of Jefferson's current critics, or why so many of them are leftists or mainstream liberals, formerly Jefferson's defenders against the Hamiltonian plutocracy.

Thomas Jefferson
a film by Ken Burns
(PBS)

The Long Affair: Thomas Jefferson and the French Revolution, 1785-1800
by Conor Cruise O'Brien
(University of Chicago, 367 pp., $29.95)

Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings: An American Controversy
by Annette Gordon-Reed
(University Press of Virginia, 279 pp., $29.95)

American Sphinx: The Character of Thomas Jefferson
by Joseph J. Ellis
(Knopf, 351 pp., $26)

Somewhat paradoxically, Jefferson's fate has paralleled that of twentieth-century American liberalism. There was always something absurd about describing Jefferson, the agrarian anti-statist, as one of the forerunners of Progressive reform and New Deal reform. Jefferson's writings on religious liberty gave the argument a certain plausibility in the 1920s, amid the *Scopes* trial and a revival of anti-Catholic nativism. A decade later, New Deal Democrats pointed with pride to their party's distant genealogical connections to the Jeffersonians. Much more influential, though, was the notion, first popularized by Herbert Croly back in 1909, that modern reformers were trying to use Hamiltonian means to achieve Jeffersonian ends. (That is, it was Jefferson who inspired latter-day government efforts to rein in the malefactors of great wealth.) With that presumption, the reputations of Jefferson and modern liberalism crested at about the same time, in the 1940s and 1950s. Yet as the century has dragged on, and as American liberalism has suffered through its own intellectual and political crises, it has become harder to sustain Jefferson's reputation as any kind of liberal forerunner.

One problem has been Jefferson's famous defense of the French Revolution, particularly his passing defense of the Jacobin Terror. As long as 1930s-style Popular Front liberals (along with the Marxists) ennobled the Jacobins as egalitarian radicals, Jefferson looked like a fine internationalist revolutionary. But during the cold war decades, as the Jacobins (and American fellow travelers of a different kind) fitfully fell into disrepute, the delusions of Jefferson's more enthusiastic writings on France and revolution became difficult to explain away.

The triumphs of the civil rights movement posed much graver problems for Jefferson's reputation. In the 1930s and 1940s, the New Deal coalition of liberal

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

northerners and the Solid South could comfortably admire a contradictory Virginia slaveholder who had also criticized slavery and proclaimed that all men were created equal. In the 1960s, as the New Deal coalition collapsed under the weight of civil rights reform, so did many liberals' and leftists' admiration of Jefferson. Despite his exquisite pain about slavery as "an abominable crime," Jefferson remained a slaveholder his entire life and arranged for the manumission of fewer than ten of his hundreds of slaves, while a significant number of his fellow Virginians (including George Washington) freed their slaves.

For all of his vaunted egalitarianism, Jefferson proffered, in his *Notes on the State of Virginia*, some hair-raising, pseudo-scientific personal observations about the innate mental and physical inferiority of blacks, including his notion that Negroes prefer whites "as uniformly as is the preference of the Oran-ootan for the black women over those of his own species." When he registered his philosophical objections to slavery, Jefferson always seemed more troubled by the institution's degrading effects on whites than by its oppression of the slaves. Until his dying day, Jefferson doubted that blacks and whites could ever coexist peaceably as American citizens; and he looked forward to the eventual disappearance of blacks from these shores, preferably through emancipation, deportation and colonization.

On similar grounds, of course, almost every politically prominent white southerner of Jefferson's time (with notable exceptions such as Jefferson's law teacher, George Wythe, and the Virginia jurist and emancipationist St. George Tucker) could be excluded from being honored in ours. As Robert McColley, one of Jefferson's most trenchant modern critics, has observed, Jefferson's hypocrisy in the matter of legislative plans for emancipation was typical of the enlightened, "anti-slavery" Virginia slaveholder gentry of the revolutionary era. Yet it is Jefferson who gets singled out, and it is easy to understand why: he wrote, in the opening lines of the Declaration of Independence, the most famous summary of the American egalitarian creed. Plainly, there was less to those great words than met the eye, for they had been written by a slaveholder who believed in the racial superiority of whites.

Interestingly, many black American reformers and radicals since Jefferson's time have been able to own the contradictions in his words and his deeds. In 1829, three years after Jefferson's death, the free black pamphleteer David Walker angrily (and lengthily) refuted the racism contained in *Notes on the State of Virginia*, calling the book "as great a barrier to our emancipation as any thing that has ever been advanced against us"; but Walker also regarded Jefferson as a great man, "a much greater philosopher the world has never afforded." Walker held up the Declaration of Independence as an unfulfilled charter for racial equality, to be secured by any means necessary. And more than a century later, Martin Luther King Jr.—speaking at the Lincoln Memorial and not the Jefferson Memorial—echoed Walker's Jeffersonian themes (though not his violent overtones) by quoting the Declaration during the March on Washington.

Still, black Americans are unlikely to harbor illusions about an American patriot who was also a slaveholder, which may explain why figures such as Walker and King have been able to approach Jefferson's legacy with a certain ironic detachment. "I'm a forgiving man," the historian John Hope Franklin remarks in Ken Burns's documentary, "therefore, I forgive him for what he did. But I remember that what he did was a transgression against mankind." By contrast, much current historical writing on Jefferson has acquired a single-minded peevishness that at times turns into truculence. On race, as on other matters, Jefferson disappoints many modern liberals and leftists, and that disappointment has led to outrage, and so a new anti-Jefferson left has joined up with the traditional anti-Jefferson right, flinging around invectives and accusations that make "red-headed son of a bitch" sound mild.

II.

It is a little odd, at this late date, to see Conor Cruise O'Brien enter the arena in the guise of an intrepid Jefferson debunker. All of the major pieces of evidence that O'Brien marshals against Jefferson—including the egregious passages on blacks in *Notes on the State of Virginia*, a notorious sanguinary letter that Jefferson wrote in praise of the French Revolution in 1793, and the stories surrounding Jefferson's alleged sexual liaison with his slave Sally Hemings—have been familiar to scholars for decades, and many of them have received special attention in recent years. Most of O'Brien's specific charges about Jefferson's political chicanery and opportunism were validated long ago. They are accepted by scholars who remain, withal, Jefferson's admirers.

DEREK BOK

STATE OF THE NATION

GOVERNMENT AND THE QUEST FOR A BETTER SOCIETY

Photo Courtesy Harvard News

State of the Nation is an eloquent assessment of where America stands today, how our society has changed in the past half-century.

Derek Bok examines the nation's progress in five areas that Americans generally consider to be of paramount importance: economic prosperity, quality of life, opportunity, personal security, and societal values. He shows that although we are better off today in most areas than we were in 1960, when compared with other leading industrial nations on more than sixty key indicators, we rank at the bottom in more than half.

What has caused this decline, and what can be done about it? Government is the problem, as well as the most important part of the solution, Bok concedes. By assessing the state of the nation through a wealth of data and identifying the reasons for its current condition, his analysis helps set the agenda for improving America's performance in the future.

$35.00 cloth

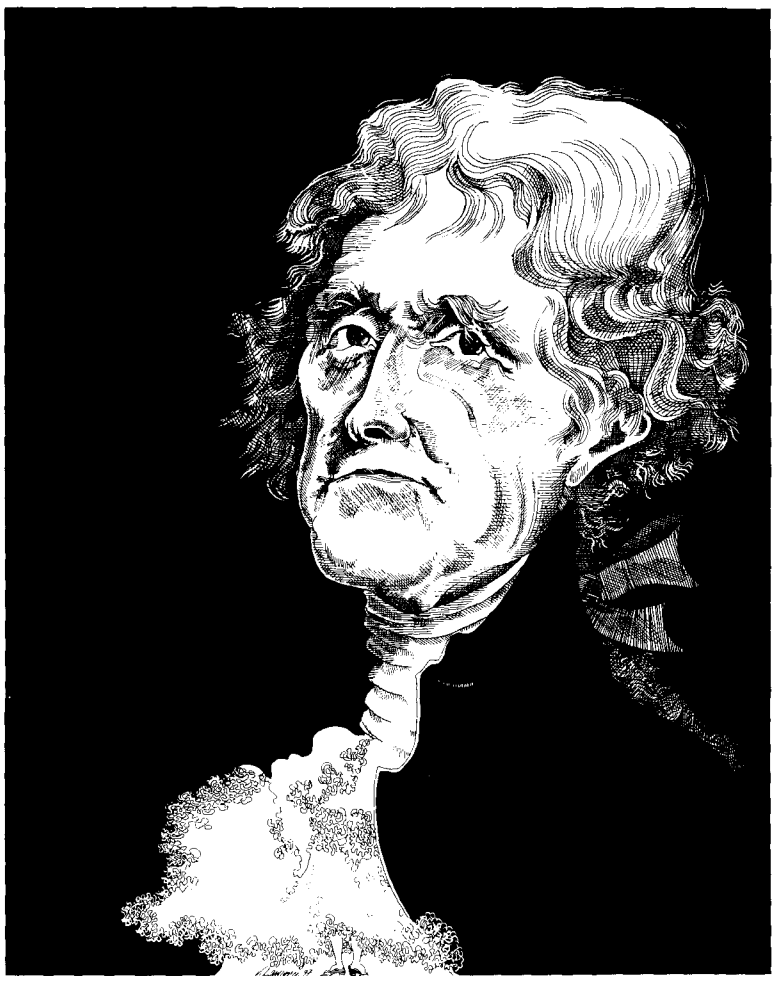
Harvard University Press
800-448-2242 • www.hup.harvard.edu

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

O'Brien seems to think that the scholarly woods are full of starry-eyed, uncritical "liberal Jeffersonians." It is a strange idea, given the drift of historical writing over the past three decades, on much of which O'Brien himself relies. "I intend, if possible, to outrage them out of existence," O'Brien writes of his liberal antagonists, "not out of physical existence, of course, but out of existence as the confused and confusing school of thought they actually constitute." O'Brien is not very precise about who belongs to this "school," apart from Dumas Malone and Jefferson's modern editor Julian Boyd (both of whom have now been dead for more than a decade), along with Malone's successor, the biographer Merrill Peterson, and President William Jefferson Clinton, and one or two others. But O'Brien certainly succeeds in being outrageous, and at times irresponsible, in trying to exclude Jefferson and his defenders from respectable company.

It adds virtually nothing to the historical record, but O'Brien's book does make three polemical contributions to the fray. First, O'Brien charges that pro-Jefferson scholars, above all Malone, have systematically distorted Jefferson's writings, to the point of suppressing documentary evidence. Second, O'Brien picks up two distinct and familiar lines of argument—the liberal criticism of Jefferson's writings on race and the conservative (more exactly, Burkean) criticism of his writings on the French Revolution—and combines them, so as to portray Jefferson's pro-Jacobinism and his racism as fatefully intertwined. Finally, O'Brien asserts that Jefferson's image ought to be removed from the American pantheon and handed over to his true political heirs: today's terrorist, racist right.

In pressing his case against earlier historians, O'Brien dispenses quickly with the usual courtesies and turns abusive. He attacks Merrill Peterson not simply for misconstruing one of Jefferson's letters, but for systematically introducing his own "sentimental and otherwise misleading assumptions" about Jefferson's character. He conjectures, rather tastelessly, that Julian Boyd tried his best to present Jefferson as a hero and then died of shock when he discovered that his idol had feet of clay. He insinuates that Boyd's successors at the Thomas Jefferson Papers "don't have time to read the stuff that is being edited," which is to say that they arrive at conclusions somewhat different from his own. But O'Brien spends the most time finding fault in Dumas Malone, who supposedly filled his six volumes with "protectively emollient *obiter dicta* about Jefferson."



THOMAS JEFFERSON BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

Critics who are this aggressive had better possess an unerring command of the facts. O'Brien does not. Describing what he calls "the most drastic example I know" of pro-Jefferson scholarly tampering, O'Brien accuses Malone of glossing over Jefferson's infamous letter of January 3, 1793, to William Short, a letter in which, according to O'Brien, Jefferson offered an "apology for genocide" in connection with the French Revolution. Malone sanitized matters, O'Brien says, by failing to quote from the letter directly, and by reducing Jefferson's bloody sentiments to an innocuous, one-sentence paraphrase. The truth is that the third volume of Malone's biography discusses the letter at considerable length, and quotes copiously from precisely the portions that O'Brien finds so horrifying, and offers Malone's reasons why the letter should not be read as a blueprint for mass slaughter. In this "most drastic" instance, it is O'Brien, not Malone, who appears to have suppressed a part of the historical record. And later O'Brien, apparently without double-checking the original documents, sustains two other historians' erroneous attribution to Malone of some borderline racist comments linked to the Hemings affair, comments that were actually written in 1873 by one John A. Jones, the editor of the *Waverly* [Ohio] *Watchman*.

But it is Jefferson, not the historians, who receives the roughest handling in *The Long Affair*. According to O'Brien, Jefferson's attachment to his privileged social station and his singular contempt for blacks overrode whatever abstract criticisms he made of slavery. The Piedmont *philosophe* lived well enough off black slave labor. Worse, he probably kept his slave Sally Hemings, thirty years his junior, as his concubine (though even O'Brien, who believes the Hemings story and offers some speculative reasoning to back it up, admits that he cannot prove its veracity). Worse, virtually all of Jefferson's public life and much of his private life, as O'Brien reads them, were shaped by a deep-seated defensiveness attached to his slaveholding. On this view, Jefferson's famous battles against Hamilton's financial and military plans arose not (as most historians contend) from his fear of an encroaching, British-style corruption of the new republic, but from his desire to shield slavery from Federalist criticism and northern-style economic development. O'Brien claims also that Jefferson's racism and his slaveholder's anxieties explain his abiding and "almost manic" support for the French Revolution.

Jefferson's record on the French Revolution has long been established. As the American ambassador to France, Jefferson was caught by surprise by the revolu-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tion's outbreak in 1789, but he immediately welcomed it as an extension of America's revolution and a mighty blow against a rotten old regime. His early political advice to his French comrades, on the eve of the fall of the Bastille, was to persuade Louis XVI to issue a charter of rights—a fairly modest, even conservative proposal that would have left the monarchy intact (and which O'Brien fails to discuss).

Only after his return home late in 1789, as George Washington's Secretary of State, did Jefferson's rhetoric about the revolution become more heated, largely as a symbolic aspect of his larger domestic battles with the Anglophilic Hamilton. As those domestic battles over banks and national finance grew nastier, Jefferson became ever more enthusiastically pro-revolution, even after he received news of the September Massacres and other outrages. Finally, on January 3, 1793, writing to Short (his former personal secretary and now the American minister to The Hague), Jefferson fell into arguing that the revolution's glorious ends justified apocalyptic means: "My own affections have been deeply wounded by some of the martyrs to this cause, but rather than it should have failed, I would have seen half the earth desolated. Were there but an Adam & an Eve left in every country, & left free, it would be better than as it now is."

It was an appalling passage in its time, and it is all the more appalling when it is read today, after two more centuries of dictators and apologist intellectuals who have countenanced slaughtering the innocent for the sake of perfecting mankind. It was here, O'Brien contends, that Jefferson exposed his truest self, as a fanatic proponent of utopian genocide, addled by what Burke called "the wild *gas* of liberty." Link up that fanaticism with Jefferson's racism, and you have largely summarized O'Brien's case that Jefferson foreshadowed the Klan and today's militia.

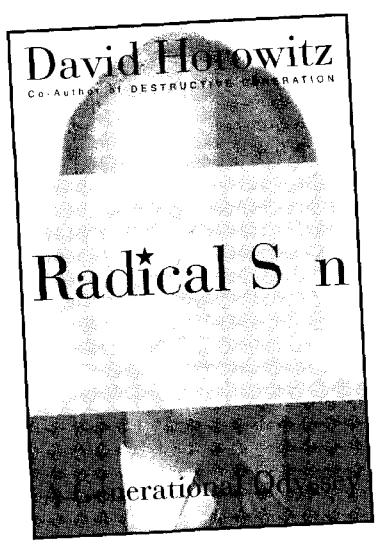
By the end of 1793, however, Jefferson's feelings about revolutionary France had cooled considerably, mainly because of the embarrassing efforts by the French envoy, Edmond Genêt, to undermine the Washington administration's neutrality policy—efforts that Jefferson feared would discredit him and his anti-Hamilton allies. Two years later (as O'Brien himself notes), Jefferson denounced what he called "the atrocities of Robespierre"; thereafter, the notorious XYZ affair, whereby Talleyrand and the French Directory attempted to exact tribute from three American diplomats, alienated him from the Jacobins' successors. Looking back, in his late 70s, he repeated his original hope that Louis XVI could have been retained as a limited monarch, thereby staving off "those enormities which demoralized the nations of the world, and destroyed, and is yet to destroy, millions and millions of its inhabitants."

And yet, O'Brien insists, Jefferson retained a lingering fondness for the revolution in Paris—as, of all things, a pretext for protecting slavery and alleviating white southern guilt. Without fear (and without evidence), O'Brien proposes that Jefferson and other Virginians used their loyalty to what he calls the "Cult of the French Revolution" as a ploy to fend off the anti-slavery jibes of Hamilton and other northern Federalists. Weary of being lectured to about slavery, Jefferson supposedly tried to turn the tables by making loyalty to the French cause the measure of one's loyalty to human liberty, including American liberty.

III.

Every point in this argument is tendentious and is made all the more irritating by O'Brien's tone of great discovery. In discounting Jefferson's anti-slavery opinions, O'Brien overlooks Jefferson's (admittedly wishful) insistence, in 1774, that "the aboli-

'From everything I know.' I finally said, 'The Panthers killed your mother.'



These words marked the turning point in one man's life. David Horowitz was a founder of the New Left and editor of *Ramparts*, its most important magazine. As a result of this murder he would lose his family, his faith, and his community, and become a combatant on the other side of the political barricades.

Now he has told his story in all its gut-wrenching detail, naming names and making the record, exposing in the process the dishonesty and cover-ups of his former comrades.

"*Radical Son* is one of the best political memoirs I've ever read." —P. J. O'Rourke

"The first great American autobiography of this generation." —George Gilder

"A riveting work of literary distinction from first page to last." —Mark Falcoff, *The American Spectator*

* * * * * * * * * * * *

DAVID HOROWITZ is the bestselling co-author of *The Rockefellers* and *The Kennedys*, president of the Center for the Study of Popular Culture, and editor of *Heterodoxy*.

Published by the Free Press, *Radical Son* is available at local bookstores everywhere; or call 800-752-6562 to order copies.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tion of domestic slavery is the great object of desire in those colonies where it was unhappily introduced in their infant state." Likewise, O'Brien overlooks Jefferson's draft in 1783 of a new constitution for Virginia that would have freed all children born to slaves after 1800 (while preparing the way for their removal), as well as Jefferson's committee's proposal to Congress the following year to exclude slaves from the western territories after 1800. Had Jefferson died in 1784, his modern critic David Brion Davis allows, he would be remembered as "one of the first statesmen in any part of the world to advocate concrete measures for restricting and eradicating Negro slavery." (By contrast, Davis goes on to observe, O'Brien's beloved Edmund Burke drafted a bill for the improvement of the conditions of West Indian slaves in 1780, preparatory to their emancipation—but Burke kept the idea secret for twelve years, out of fear of dividing the Whig Party.)

Since he argues prosecutorially, O'Brien fails to capture the tragic trajectory of Jefferson's views. When, for example, *Notes on the State of Virginia* (which Jefferson did not originally intend for general circulation) was printed in a small private anonymous edition in Paris in 1785, it was, as Jefferson feared, the anti-slavery passages that caught people's attention. (John Adams, one of O'Brien's Burkean heroes, read the book immediately and congratulated Jefferson, claiming that his remarks on slavery were "worth Diamonds" and would "have more effect than Volumes written by mere Philosophers.") Thereafter Jefferson would be scrupulously circumspect about his anti-slavery opinions, to the point of maintaining a virtual public silence on the subject. But Jefferson's retreat from his more youthful convictions is a historical and biographical problem in need of an explanation, one more exacting than O'Brien's flat description of his attachment to slavery as "a classical case of *Odi et amo*."

O'Brien is on much stronger ground when he observes that, even by late-eighteenth-century standards, Jefferson never became a liberal on race, a failing for which authorities ranging from the Abbé Gregoire to various northern Federalist editors took him to task. O'Brien correctly points out Jefferson's antipathy to the legal rights of Virginia's free blacks, which became especially evident during the debates over revising Virginia's legal codes in the 1770s and 1780s. And as late as the 1820s, when he acknowledged that the size of America's slave population was too great to allow for a summary deportation of blacks, Jefferson was still cooking up colonization schemes whereby the federal government would buy all newborn slaves from their owners and eventually ship them to Santo Domingo.

It would be a travesty to portray Jefferson as a proponent of the sort of interracial American democracy that is a cardinal principle of modern liberal politics. But it is also unfair to portray Jefferson as O'Brien portrays him, as the prophet and the patron of racist evil. One can find racist statements from some of Jefferson's southern antagonists (and even from some northerners) that are just as damning as Jefferson's, but that also justify the institution of slavery, which Jefferson never did. The pro-slavery racism that later helped to propel southern secession had less in common with the ideas of Thomas Jefferson (whom the more thoughtful Confederates rejected as half-hearted) than with those of figures like the South Carolina Federalist William Loughton Smith, who declared in the House of Representatives in 1790 that the slaves were such an indolent, improvident people that "when emancipated, they would either starve or plunder."

Jefferson, by contrast, struggled with his racial assumptions. In a letter to Gregoire in 1809—a letter well-known to scholars, but not cited by O'Brien—Jefferson explained that his ideas about blacks in the *Notes* "were the result of personal observation on the limited sphere of my own State," that he expressed them "with great hesitation" and earnestly wished to see their "complete refutation," and that, in any case, superior natural talents could not justify granting anyone superior legal or civil rights. ("Because Sir Isaac Newton was superior to others in understanding," Jefferson noted, "he was not therefore lord of the person or property of others.")

Although Jefferson was profoundly pessimistic about social relations between whites and freed blacks, his beliefs about linking emancipation with colonization were far from extreme in his time. Indeed, when Jefferson died in 1826, most white pro-emancipationists (and even some free blacks) favored some sort of colonization scheme, unable to imagine true harmony ever existing between the races in America. In the North, especially outside New England and the Yankee cultural outcroppings of the old northwest, such views persisted into the Civil War era, even among some implacable white anti-slavery partisans. In December 1862, President Lincoln declared to Congress that "I strongly favor colonization," by which he meant finding the freed slaves new homes "in congenial climes, and with people of their own blood and race." Three years earlier, Lincoln had proposed "[a]ll honour to Jefferson" for declaring as a self-evident truth that all men are created equal. Would O'Brien cast Lincoln, too, as a precursor of Hendrik Verwoerd or merely as an early, muddle-headed "liberal Jeffersonian"?

O'Brien's Burkean criticisms of Jefferson's wild Jacobinism and its pro-slavery origins are also skewed. In fact, as O'Brien notes in passing, American popular support for the French Revolution remained remarkably strong and widespread in 1793, even after the execution of Louis XVI and the onset of the Terror. For domestic reasons, pro-French sentiment did tend to run stronger in the South than in the North—not, however, as O'Brien claims, as a contorted defense of southern slavery, which most northern Federalists were happy enough to leave alone, but chiefly due to reasonable fears (expressed in Jefferson's numerous writings about the "Anglican monarchical aristocratical party") that the Federalists aimed to impose a centralized state in order to prop up a northern financial aristocracy.

Indeed, some of the most forthright pro-slavery elements of the planter class supported neither Jefferson nor the Jacobins. They were political allies of the northern Federalists, and sworn enemies, as John Rutledge Jr. of South Carolina declared, of "this new-fangled French philosophy of liberty and equality." And in later years it would be the anti-abolitionists and pro-slavery spokesmen who upheld Burkean traditionalism against the likes of William Lloyd Garrison and Harriet Beecher Stowe. It is an irony that O'Brien totally misses.

In the North, meanwhile, much of the frenzied millennial rhetoric in the everyday debates over the French Revolution made Jefferson's passing comments in the "Adam and Eve" letter sound almost meek by comparison. (In 1794, for example, Ezra Stiles, the gentle and venerable Congregationalist president of Yale College, called with full-throated anti-monarchical enthusiasm for "more Use of the *Guillotine* yet" in France, so that "Right Liberty and Tranquillity can be established.") Given the fragility of republicanism in a world of monarchs and aristocrats, it would have been remarkable had public emotions not reached such a pitch. And when their own political moment of truth came in 1800, of course, Jefferson and his supporters erected no guillotines and launched no insurrections. Instead they organized an electoral oppo-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sition that defeated the Federalists and conducted a peaceful, indeed conciliatory, transfer of power.

None of this, to be sure, extenuates or excuses Jefferson for indulging in delusions about the Jacobins, or for writing some chilling sentences to William Short, or for retreating from his early anti-slavery stances, or for endorsing crude racial theories. If O'Brien were interested only in registering those points, and in lodging a brief on behalf of certain northern Federalists regarding slavery, race and the French Revolution, there could be few objections. But that would have been banal, given all that historians have written of late. Instead, O'Brien rips portions of Jefferson's writings out of their historical and biographical contexts and extrapolates them 200 years into the future, in order to advance his purpose, which is to turn Jefferson into the political ancestor of Timothy McVeigh.

And O'Brien is too smart to leave matters there. To complete the demonization of Jefferson, he must deny Jefferson's authorship of the Declaration of Independence, the spiritual wellspring of American egalitarianism. O'Brien certainly gives it a try. The Continental Congress, he states correctly, entrusted the work of preparing the Declaration to a five-man committee, which also included John Adams and Benjamin Franklin. "Jefferson's draft," he writes, "was reviewed and corrected by the committee, before being laid before Congress, whose consensus it was designed to reflect. And Congress itself made further changes in the draft already amended by the committee." Hence, O'Brien concludes, Jefferson was merely the "draughtsman" of the Declaration, not its author—a fact, he contends, that ought finally to "put an end to the official cult of Jefferson within the American civil religion."

O'Brien's account is elliptical and misleading. After taking a couple of days to draft the Declaration, Jefferson did submit his work to Adams and Franklin, but they suggested only minor revisions, on the order of substituting "self-evident" truths for Jefferson's original "sacred and undeniable" truths. Congress then considered the committee's draft and made several major changes, removing about one-quarter of the text. But almost all of the changes focused on the list of grievances about George III. Aside from striking two redundant words—making the rights endowed by the Creator simply "inalienable" and not "inherent and inalienable"—Congress approved the crucial opening section of the Declaration, written almost entirely by Jefferson, without comment. Thomas Jefferson, in short, was most definitely the author of the words in the Declaration that have meant the most in American history.

A flawed exercise in biographical annihilation, *The Long Affair* brings to mind the remark of one Jackson-era politician that it is sometimes possible to kill a man too dead. A lighter touch would have served O'Brien better. For there is one subject on which his antipathies may have unwittingly led him closer to the truth than most other historians have been willing to go. And that is the most explosive subject of all: the story of Sally Hemings.

IV.

"Why not talk about the Declaration of Independence, his battles with Hamilton and Burr ... the Kentucky Resolutions?" Annette Gordon-Reed asks in her detailed and at times devastating reassessment of the Jefferson-Hemings controversy. It is a question that one hears regularly from Jefferson scholars, who have grown weary of the collective obsession with Jefferson's sex life, and who have grown worried that, thanks to ridiculous films such as *Jefferson in Paris*, the obsession will eclipse an awareness of Jefferson's contributions. Gordon-Reed is convinced that the worries are misplaced, that Jefferson's legacy is too well-established in history and myth to be effaced by the Hemings story, and she is probably right. Still, the story, and the debate over its truth or falsity, continues to fascinate, if only because it is open to so many conflicting interpretations.

The story first gained widespread notice in 1802, when the vituperative (and racist) journalist James Callender, a disgruntled former Jefferson supporter, reported in the Federalist press that President Jefferson and his "wench Sally," "the African VENUS," had parented five children. Callender based his account on rumors that had been making the rounds in Virginia for years, and he made little effort to distinguish gossip from fact. Callender was known as a scurrilous exaggerator. But he was not an outright liar; and Sally Hemings had given birth to children whose father had obviously been white, and who, in some respects, physically resembled Jefferson.

Seventy-one years later, Sally's son Madison Hemings—who had been born in 1805, had been freed by the terms of Jefferson's will in 1826 and was living in Ohio—told the editor of a local newspaper that his mother had confirmed that

guide books

DISCLOSING NEW WORLDS

Entrepreneurship, Democratic Action, and the Cultivation of Solidarity

Charles Spinosa, Fernando Flores, and Hubert L. Dreyfus

"*Disclosing New Worlds* represents an extraordinarily fruitful response to the radically changed social and intellectual conditions of the late twentieth century. It breaks with the theoretical bias of modern scholarship and provides for a deeper understanding and appreciation of economics, politics, and culture." — Albert Borgmann, University of Montana, and author of *Crossing the Postmodern Divide*

220 pp. $22.50

ECO-EFFICIENCY

The Business Link to Sustainable Development

Livio D. DeSimone and Frank Popoff, with the World Business Council for Sustainable Development

"*Eco-Efficiency* is not about theory: it is about action. Through concrete cases, it shows that with commitment and imagination, both economic benefits and environmental improvements can beachieved." — Jacqueline Aloisi de Larderel, Director, UNEP (United Nations Environment Programme) Industry and Environment

292 pp. $25

Now in Paperback

WHITE HOUSE TO YOUR HOUSE

Media and Politics in Virtual America

Edwin Diamond and Robert A. Silverman

"A revealing analysis of how the practice of politics and government has changed in this era of instant and constant television news, radio talk shows and alternative communications... Whether criticizing or praising the media, their darts are well aimed and worth considering." — Hal Bruno, Political Director, ABC News

192 pp. $12.50 paper

To order call **800-356-0343** (US & Canada) or (617) 625-8569.

http://www-mitpress.mit.edu

The MIT Press

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Jefferson was the father of her children, who were born between 1789 (or perhaps 1790) and 1808. Hemings's friend Israel Jefferson, another former slave from Monticello, also living in Ohio, corroborated Hemings's story. (Other details in Hemings's account jibed with the memoirs dictated a quarter of a century earlier by Isaac, another of Jefferson's former slaves, including the claim that Sally Hemings was the illegitimate offspring of Jefferson's father-in-law John Wayles—and, hence, the half-sister of Jefferson's wife, who died in 1782.) In 1874, however, the prominent historian James Parton published a biography of Jefferson and merited a claim (based on information from Jefferson's grandson Thomas Jefferson Randolph) that Jefferson's nephew Peter Carr, and not Jefferson, was Sally Hemings's lover and the father of her children. Here, then, were two clashing genealogies, the one based on the as-told-to traditions of an obscure black family, the other based on the as-told-to traditions of one of the most famous white families in the country.

The revival of scholarly interest in Jefferson during the 1940s and 1950s led to fresh studies of the Hemings matter, the most famous of which, Fawn Brodie's *Thomas Jefferson: An Intimate History* (1974), argued that Jefferson and Hemings were indeed lovers, in a relationship that began in Paris in 1788 (where Hemings attended on one of Jefferson's daughters) and lasted until Jefferson's death in 1826. Brodie's claim kicked off a furious debate in which, it is fair to say, the overwhelming majority of professional historians (including Malone) emphatically rejected her account, along with all other versions of a purported Jefferson-Hemings liaison. Yet the story has been given life in films, in magazines, in historical fiction and in the insistence of various African Americans living in Ohio, Illinois and elsewhere that they are direct descendants of Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings.

Gordon-Reed is a scrupulous investigator who refuses to commit herself either way. It is her view that, given the surviving evidence, and short of performing some sort of DNA test using Jefferson's remains (which may not be practicable), certainty is impossible. Still, her detailed review of the writings by Jefferson's supposed defenders—chiefly Malone, Virginius Dabney, John C. Miller and Douglass Adair—exposes recurring patterns of special pleading, faulty logic and misreporting of evidence. Gordon-Reed allows that Fawn Brodie also made her share of blunders, including a clumsy use of gimmicky psychohistory. After Gordon-Reed finishes with the others' accounts, however, Brodie's doesn't look so bad. And after finishing Gordon-Reed's book, it is difficult to avoid thinking in terms of the probability, and not merely the possibility, of a Jefferson-Hemings liaison.

Until I read Gordon-Reed, I had taken as gospel Adair's essay "The Jefferson Scandals," written in 1960, but published posthumously in 1974. Adair was a brilliant intellectual historian, with a special flair for scholarly detective work. Unlike many other Jefferson experts, he believed that Madison Hemings's account was sincere and, within the boundaries of that sincerity, accurate—an evaluation that squared with my own sense of Hemings's recollections. But Adair found no mention in Jefferson's farm account book of any child being born to Sally Hemings before 1795, meaning that she could not have borne a child conceived with Jefferson in Paris, as Madison Hemings claimed. Adair also tracked down the recollections of one Edmund Bacon, a Monticello overseer, originally published in 1862, which, Adair asserted, exonerated Jefferson and offered "*presumptive* evidence" that Peter Carr was Sally Hemings's lover. Adair then built what seemed a plausible circumstantial case that, first, Jefferson could not possibly have been Sally Hemings's lover, and second, that Hemings must have picked up Callender's story, embellished it, and passed it on to her children.

But Gordon-Reed punches several holes in Adair's theory. Jefferson did not diligently keep his farm accounts from the time of his return from Paris in 1789 until 1794, years when his duties as Secretary of State mainly kept him away from home; and it is thus entirely possible for Sally Hemings to have given birth in 1789 or 1790 and for the event to have gone unnoted. Nor would it have been surprising if Jefferson neglected to enter the birth, for entering it would have been tantamount to acknowledging his paternity, given his and Sally Hemings's living arrangements in Paris nine months earlier. The birth of a Hemings child in 1789 or 1790 would be consistent with Callender's claim that she had given birth to five of Jefferson's children as of 1802. Finally, Gordon-Reed, with support from Brodie's book, finds evidence that could explain what eventually happened to the mysterious child, who could have died, run away or been sent to live with another family.

In any event, Adair's findings (or lack of findings) in the farm book do not settle anything. Neither, Gordon-Reed explains, do the recollections of Edmund Bacon, who only began working at Monticello in 1806 and had his own reasons to deny Jefferson's paternity. And neither does the rest of Adair's reconstruction of the evidence, which, as Gordon-Reed shows, is based on a fanciful handling of the facts and a highly prejudiced view of Sally Hemings, Maria Cosway (Jefferson's famous Paris infatuation) and Jefferson himself. There is one interesting query of Adair's that Gordon-Reed does not answer: Why would Jefferson risk his presidency and his historical reputation by continuing a liaison with Sally Hemings for at least five years after Callender's exposé appeared? But there are the vagaries of the human heart to consider, and there is also the rest of the evidence that Gordon-Reed discusses, and so that unanswered question does not settle things, either.

The most compelling evidence in support of a Jefferson-Hemings connection was actually assembled by Dumas Malone, who nonetheless stubbornly refused to believe the story. The evidence concerns proximity. We know that Jefferson and Sally Hemings were living in close enough quarters in 1789 to have conceived a child. After their return from Paris, she spent virtually all of her life at Monticello. He spent only occasional stretches of time there (except for the hiatus between his resignation as Secretary of State in 1793 and his inauguration as vice president in 1797), until he completed his second presidential term in 1809. Yet repeatedly, some months after Jefferson did visit his beloved homestead, Sally Hemings gave birth. Gordon-Reed summarizes: "The relationship was so strong that it can be described as creating a pattern. The pattern went like this: Jefferson comes home for six months and leaves. Hemings bears a child four months after he is gone. Jefferson comes home for six weeks. Hemings bears a child eight months after he is gone. Jefferson comes for two months and leaves. Hemings bears a child eight months after he has gone. This went on for fifteen years through six children. He was there when she conceived, and she never conceived when he was not there."

It seems highly unlikely that some other purported father's fertility would be so exactly linked, for a decade and a half, to Jefferson's presence at Monticello. And when these facts are connected to the rest of the supporting evidence that Gordon-Reed assembles—Madison Hemings's and Israel Jefferson's statements, the matter-of-fact diary notations of a Jefferson associate, John Hartwell Cocke, about Jefferson's having had a slave mistress, the treatment of Sally Hemings's children including their manumission, and other considera-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tions—the case seems too strong to dismiss out of hand, as most professional historians (though not Conor Cruise O'Brien) are still wont to do.

But so what? Without additional evidence, certain fervent Jefferson admirers will never allow that he could have slept with a slave. Neither will certain fervent Jefferson haters, ranging from black nationalists to anti-Jefferson liberals, who insist that Jefferson's racism would have precluded any sort of sexual connection with a woman of even partial African descent. And still other Jefferson haters, such as O'Brien, are bound to take the opposite tack, insisting that Jefferson's likely relation with Hemings advances their own view of Jefferson as a moral monster. Gordon-Reed remains, strictly speaking, an agnostic, but she reasonably encourages what might be called a stance of sympathetic (though not fervent) acceptance.

In doing so, she cuts to the heart of the myths that still govern our thinking about miscegenation under slavery. Those myths lead us to imagine that an omnipotent Thomas Jefferson, the white master, must have imposed himself on the powerless Sally Hemings, the black slave girl, in scenes of more or less forcible rape. Without question, rapes did occur under slavery. Still, as Gordon-Reed smartly observes, the evidence in the case of Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings does not support a story involving "thirty-eight years' worth of nights of 'Come here, gal!' " Nor, given the courtship norms of the eighteenth-century Virginia gentry, would there have been something terribly unseemly about a 45-year-old male establishing a sexual or emotional attachment with a 15-year-old female.

Instead, we are left with a less sensational and more poignant story, along the lines that Madison Hemings outlined, the story of a match that lasted more than a decade, that began with a middle-aged, widowed white statesman (who had pledged to his dying wife that he would never remarry) and a young, fair-skinned African American woman. The woman was almost certainly the half-sister of the widower's late wife—and she was also the widower's slave. But enslaved though she was, the woman, by assenting to the match, gained enough influence over the widower to extract the promise that he would free her children, and years later she held him to his promise. Bound though he was by the rules of his class to keep the relationship secret, the widower, a vigorous man who had never abjured female companionship, sustained some semblance of connubial affection, at least when he was back on his Virginia mountainside. The hard facts of slavery, compounded by the widower's earlier pronouncements against miscegenation and by his need to sustain his respectable position in politics and society, rendered the relationship absurd, almost to the point of tragedy. But neither the widower nor the young woman could undo those facts, and so they lived with them as best they could.

The prospect that Madison Hemings's story came close to the truth should not, however, fill us with horror. It should fill us with cheer. Miscegenation is not always the same thing as subjugation. If one of the white mandarin men who founded this country respected, even loved, a black woman slave, and created a real but underground family with her, then it is only further proof that intimacy between black and white, and the possibility of decency between black and white, existed even in conditions of brutal racial oppression, and so may exist in the bettered but still troubled conditions in which we now live.

V.

"Almost every other American statesman might be described in a parenthesis," Henry Adams wrote in his great history of the Jefferson and Madison administrations. "A few broad strokes of the brush would paint the portraits of all the early Presidents with this exception ... but Jefferson could be painted only touch by touch, with a fine pencil, and the perfection of the likeness depended upon the shifting and uncertain flicker of its semi-transcendent shadows." Adams dismissed James Callender's reports about Jefferson and "Black Sally" as libelous and based "on a confusion of persons which could not be cleared up." (He also thought that the story was utterly irreconcilable with Jefferson's "refined" and "feminine" nature.) Yet even if it turns out that Callender's account was not wholly false, Adams's general point about Jefferson's elusiveness holds true, in the Sally Hemings matter as in practically everything else. Move the light even slightly, and the Jefferson whom you thought you knew and understood looks different. Try and describe him whole, and you wind up with a string of paradoxes, with Jefferson the patrician democrat, or the egalitarian slaveholder, or the rustic cosmopolitan, or the pragmatic ideologue.

The strength of Ken Burns's *Thomas Jefferson* is its attention to the nuances in Jefferson's character and career. The film is not flawless. It contains some factual errors, as when it confuses Charles Cotesworth Pinckney, a national contender in 1800, with his brother Thomas. More surprisingly, there are annoying visual mistakes: Delacroix's famous allegory of 1830, "Liberty Leading the People," for example, is used to illustrate the events of 1789. Lacking the photographic details that have enriched his previous documentaries, Burns has a difficult time bringing the eighteenth century to life. It is weird to include "Simple Gifts," the Shaker hymn, on a Jefferson soundtrack. And as in their series on the Civil War, Burns and his scriptwriter Geoffrey C. Ward have a weakness for sentimental passages that detract from a fuller understanding of political events, especially during Jefferson's presidency.

Still, Burns's effort is historically on the mark about most of the important themes, including Jefferson and slavery. Where the facts are in doubt, as in the Sally Hemings matter, the film presents all possibilities and wisely suspends final judgment. Where the facts are agreed upon but historians still differ, the film clearly and calmly airs these differences. Above all, *Thomas Jefferson* tries admirably hard to convey the complexity of Jefferson's personality, including his stubborn faith in a benign providence despite some crushing personal losses.

These virtues are even more in evidence in *American Sphinx*, a new study of Jefferson by Joseph J. Ellis, who appears as one of Burns's talking heads. Ellis is not exactly easy on Jefferson. On some points, such as the "Adam and Eve" letter—which Ellis describes as "an extreme version of what might be called revolutionary realism ... in the Lenin or Mao mold"—he is nearly as severe as O'Brien. Yet Ellis knows that Jefferson's essential ideas cannot easily be construed from the sentiments contained in

Ah, Icarus

Hey, toe-headed boy,
here, out of the sky
drop
the basket of stars and flowers
and lay your loin cloth over the chair.
I have room for you in my bed.

It is sweet the way the wind blows.

I have dreamed of you many nights
driving up the dark sky, reciting,
to stay awake, an old man's poem.

ALICE ROSE GEORGE

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a single private letter, or even several letters; and his legacy cannot be converted into the political positions of our own drastically different political and intellectual world. There were, without question, some striking consistencies in Jefferson's thinking over the course of his long political career; and there was much else in his thinking that he himself, at least, believed to be consistent. But to judge him solely on the basis of the causes and the doctrines that he espoused—or, conversely, to judge him on the basis of his failures to live up to those causes and those doctrines—is to traduce Jefferson, to simplify him, to misunderstand his place in our early history. If he was not quite the enigma that Ellis makes him out to be, he was certainly a paradox.

Jefferson deserves his reputation as an Enlightenment polymath, but he was hardly the most imposing American political thinker of the revolutionary generation. His ally Madison was wiser and more original; his foe Hamilton was bolder and more brilliant; and his on-again, off-again friend Adams, though ponderous, was more prolific. Shy and studious in manner, with a thin high-pitched voice, Jefferson was also an unimpressive public speaker. But none surpassed him in his abiding devotion to the Whig republican principles that originally inspired the patriot leadership of 1776—above all, an intense distrust of concentrated political power and public debt as tools of government corruption. None surpassed him (except perhaps Thomas Paine) in his utopian conviction that an age of reason had truly dawned, in which an enlightened humanity had gained the power to abolish the ancient scourges of kingship, war and oppression. And none matched what John Adams described as Jefferson's "happy talent in composition," his ability to proclaim the revolutionary leadership's ideas in precise and radiant prose.

His optimism about the power of individual human reason at times reached visionary heights, with mixed results. When the spirit was upon him, Jefferson produced all sorts of private schemes for human betterment, including dividing the nation up into small, self-governing ward republics. Occasionally (and mainly in his private correspondence), he stretched his ideas and his loyalties to their logical conclusions, as in his awful vaporizing about Adam and Eve. During the last two years of his second presidential term, moreover, his Enlightenment idealism led him to stick by his experimental embargo policy (designed to avoid armed conflict with France and England) long after the policy had battered the nation's economy and had nearly ruined his political reputation.

In his more adroit moments as a political leader, however, Jefferson perceived the limits of his idealism and adjusted his words and deeds accordingly, as experience (and from time to time, self-preservation) demanded. Having originally spurned political parties as destroyers of republican harmony, he wound up directing the first semblance of a national electoral organization, in order to remove from power what he considered a corrupt Federalist faction. Having railed against inflated executive power and federal spending, he went ahead with the Louisiana Purchase, in order to expand and to secure what he called America's "empire of liberty." Having celebrated rural virtue in *Notes on the State of Virginia*, and bid Americans to rely on the Old World for manufactured goods, he later allowed that "we must now place the manufacturer by the side of the agriculturalist."

Less happily, as Ellis calmly but unflinchingly explains, Jefferson also adjusted his idealism about slavery after the mid-1780s. As soon as his *Notes* began circulating among his fellow southern planters, Jefferson, alarmed at a possible loss of political favor and leverage, backed off from what had been his leading anti-slavery role. Other factors also made him skittish on the subject. He found it difficult to square his pessimism about race relations with an easily practicable plan for dealing with freed slaves. His mounting debts to various English and Scottish creditors deepened his awareness of how thoroughly his own financial well-being relied on the value and the labor of his slaves. And if Madison Hemings's story is true (which Ellis doubts), Jefferson had additional personal reasons, after the mid-1780s, to say as little about slavery as possible.

Instead, Jefferson withdrew into what Ellis aptly calls a position of "self-serving paralysis." He hated slavery and beckoned to its eventual eradication, but he would no longer publicly endorse any plan of emancipation. He looked to younger men and to future generations to take up the battle—too weary himself to advance a cause whose time had not yet come. Ellis quotes the Duc de La Rochefoucauld-Liancourt, the liberal French aristocrat who, after escaping the Terror, paid a visit to Monticello in 1796: "The generous and enlightened Mr. Jefferson cannot but demonstrate a desire to see these negroes emancipated. But he sees so many difficulties in their emancipation even postponed, he adds so many conditions to render it practicable, that it is thus reduced to the impossible."

Finally Jefferson fancied himself as a tragic figure who could do little more than keep careful and benevolent watch over the slaves—members of "my family," he called them—whom fate had entrusted to his care. We are left with an image of Jefferson as increasingly self-deluded on slavery, shielded from any pangs of hypocrisy by his fatalism and his powerful reserves of denial. In the 1820s, Jefferson's determination to evade the slavery issue led him so far away from his youthful reformism that he backed the pro-slavery side in the Missouri statehood debates, on the specious grounds that if slavery was allowed to expand further westward, it would become diffused and weakened.

But more telling than any of Jefferson's political positions was the way in which he arranged life at Monticello, as the enlightened patriarch presiding over his Palladian retreat, amid his books, his family, his gadgets and his guests—but with almost all of his slaves (save for the privileged, fair-skinned Hemings clan) living and working out of sight, further down the mountainside or on one of Jefferson's remote estates. "[T]here were no Negro and other outhouses around the mansion, as you generally see on [other] plantations," the overseer Edmund Bacon recalled. That is, Jefferson at Monticello did as much as he could, physically and psychically, to distance himself from the fact that he owned other human beings. In his rural seat of Reason, unreasonable slavery, and the blackness that was its emblem, could not be expelled, and so Jefferson concealed them as best he could.

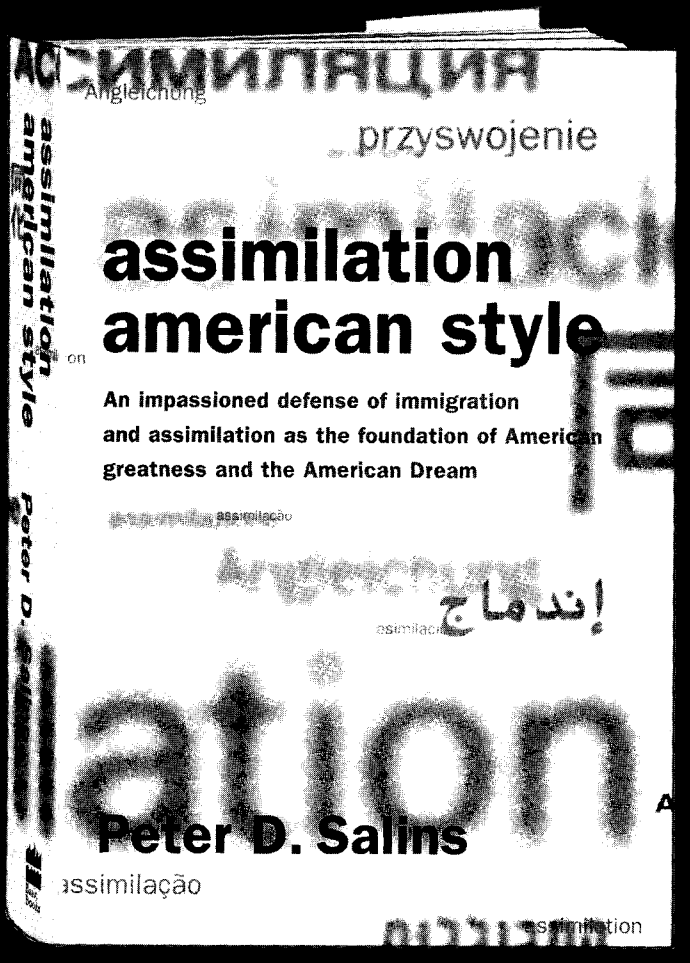
VI.

The Civil War, followed a century later by the Second Reconstruction, exploded Jefferson's legacy on slavery and race. The era of high industrialism, mass immigration and urban growth at the turn of the last century destroyed what remained of his vision of a homogeneous agrarian America. The New Deal, and then the cold war, enlarged the lineaments of national political and military power beyond anything Jefferson would have thought possible or desirable. The mechanistic natural laws on which he based his views of man and society no longer stand. "The entire mental universe in which Jefferson did his thinking has changed so dramatically...." Ellis writes, "that any direct connection between then and now must be regarded as a highly problematic enterprise."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

WHY IMMIGRATION IS VITAL TO AMERICA'S FUTURE

Social scientist Peter Salins presents a lucid and powerfully persuasive argument for preserving and encouraging immigration to our shores. Countering the claims of nativists and multiculturalists alike, Salins shows that the history of America is a history of different ethnic groups forging a new national identity, and argues that abandoning this process now will undermine the prosperity and social cohesion that sets us apart from the rest of the world.



"A first-rate synthesis....[Salins] makes a compelling case that for immigration to succeed it must be firmly assimilationist."
—Wall Street Journal

"Hostile to both centrifugal multiculturalism and sour nativism, Salins. . . rightly understands that the issue now is group identity, the *plures* from which the American *unum* continually emerge."
—Washington Post Book World

"Deserves to be read by those who truly want to understand our immigrant past and to participate in the present deliberation over immigration policy."
—LINDA CHAVEZ, President,
Center for Equal Opportunity

At bookstores or call 1-800-331-3761

A New Republic Book

BasicBooks
A Division of HarperCollins*Publishers*
Also available from HarperCollins*CanadaLtd*
http://www.harpercollins.com

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

What survives of Jefferson's philosophy exists largely in strange combinations, right and left. The conservative wing of the Republican Party, as Ellis observes, upholds a nostalgic version of the Jeffersonian idea that the government that governs best governs least—*except, perhaps, when it comes to government involvement in the moral life of the citizenry.* Modern liberals and Democrats are all for the promotion of equality, but with ideas about positive state action and group rights that Jefferson would have found anathema. Perhaps it would be well for these partial Jeffersonianisms to cease and to desist. Perhaps Jefferson cannot provide political guidance, apart from his famous injunction to Madison that "the earth belongs in usufruct to the living," and that we must truly be the masters of our own fates.

But Ellis is not prepared to give up on Jefferson's pertinence. He astutely locates a powerful Jeffersonian legacy in the ways Americans of diverse opinions continue to frame their views about personal freedom: "Alone among the influential political thinkers of the revolutionary generation, Jefferson began with the assumption of individual sovereignty, then attempted to develop prescriptions for government that at best protected individual rights and at worst minimized the impact of government or the powers of the state on individual lives." Illusory though that image of sovereignty might be, it has long endured as a legitimizing principle and core conviction of American politics, liberal and conservative, forever putting more forceful claims of communitarian regulation or group entitlements on the defensive. On the right, it has become a bromide for the unfettered pursuit of self-interest. On the left, it has appeared as what Lincoln, in 1859, called Jefferson's "superior devotion to the personal rights of men, holding the rights of property to be secondary only, and greatly inferior." We are not, in any way, a consensual people; but most of the time, our conflicts revolve around how best to secure the individual sovereignty that Jefferson proclaimed.

And there is more to Jefferson's legacy. Ellis calls it a style of political leadership "based on the capacity to rest comfortably with contradictions." No, Ellis does not mean that Jefferson knew glibly how to believe in everything. Jeffersonism is not Clintonism. (The present occupant of the White House certainly does not concur with his Enlightenment predecessor that there are fixed rules of nature.) Ellis is referring, rather, to Jefferson's ability to lead a nation of sovereign individuals who are preternaturally suspicious of government. And in this sense, the protean quality of Thomas Jefferson is indeed serving Bill Clinton in good stead. Jefferson's elusiveness, his outright deviousness, was a great political strength. As Ellis shows, it allowed different constituencies to see in him what they wanted to see, and this allowed him to lead while appearing to be a follower.

But there was something even greater about Jefferson, and Ellis does not quite pin it down. More than any of his American contemporaries, Jefferson took some of the most radical ideas of the Enlightenment and put them to the test in the highest reaches of the real political world. His failures, his compromises, his flip-flops and his personal shortcomings will forever be seized upon by his critics—and rightly, for they exemplify the limits of rationality in politics. And yet America has been far richer for Jefferson's hypocrisy, for the egalitarian and democratic impulses that he infused into our public life. Ten days before he died, Jefferson wrote that "the general spread of the light of science" had "laid open to every view the palpable truth, that the mass of mankind has not been born with saddles on their backs, nor a favored few, booted and spurred, ready to ride them legitimately by the grace of God." Before Jefferson and his revolutionary generation, those saddles and those spurs were fully legitimate. They are legitimate no more, even if they have not all been fully destroyed. We are still far from fulfilling the Declaration's creed about equality before the law. Nor have we provided, as the Declaration demanded that we do, the equality of opportunity to gain a modest prosperity: if wealth is the measure of opportunity in America, we have become more unequal in recent times. And yet, over the centuries, more and more Americans have also ridden the ride of which Jefferson dreamed, not only by the grace of God, but also by the grace of Jefferson. •

The Clown Prince

By Mark Polizzotti

Duchamp: A Biography by Calvin Tomkins

(Henry Holt and Company, 550 pp., $35)

André Breton, who was in a position to judge, once called Marcel Duchamp "certainly the most intelligent and, for many, the most troublesome *gênant* man of this first half of the twentieth century." The epithet *gênant* can also mean "annoying," "awkward" or "cumbersome," and it leaves the translator with an embarrassment of choices, as several of these adjectives could justly be applied to Duchamp. The man who enriched or inspired (albeit noncommittally) the century's most resolutely "anti-artistic" movements also produced some of the signature cultural artifacts of our time, from the *Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 2* in 1912 to the Mona Lisa with mustache and goatee in 1919. And when even these unconventional images threatened to become absorbed into the mainstream, Duchamp further confounded his admirers by abandoning painting altogether, purportedly to devote his time to chess.

As the great paradox and the clown prince of modern art, Duchamp has given rise to many volumes of complicated analysis, which more often than not fall on their faces the moment they try to pin down the artist and his works. Calvin Tomkins, for his part, has written a biography of the man that takes the opposite tack, refusing practically any analysis other than Duchamp's own arch comments. As a result, Tomkins's book is often as intelligent, as troublesome, and as annoying as its subject.

Admittedly, Tomkins has a tough row to hoe. Few figures have been as intellectually or emotionally elusive as Duchamp. Few have been so prolific in self-contradictory statements. And few have so carefully protected their inner self against the prying of acquaintances and exegetes. Elusiveness, in fact, seems to be the dominant motif of Duchamp's life: not for nothing does Tomkins call him "the ultimate escape artist." He slipped out of any attachment—to an art form, a lover or a home—the moment it threatened to grow invasive or repetitive. Ascetic to a fault, he made do with the barest essentials, rarely staying in one

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

place—in the space of a few years, he lived in Paris, Rouen, Munich, New York and Buenos Aires—and ready to leave it all behind on a whim. Breton told of seeing Duchamp flip a coin to decide whether to stay in Paris or to leave that same night for New York. Wherever he landed, his accommodations were small and sparsely furnished, a scarcely maintained pied-à-terre rather than a home.

This relentless nomadism (which extended to people as well as places, and which Tomkins attributes to an overriding need to preserve his freedom) was one of Duchamp's most fascinating, if difficult, qualities. "The artist should be alone," went his creed. "Everyone for himself, as in a shipwreck." Relentlessly pursued by women, several of whom conceived a real passion for him, he kept his suitors at arm's length by indulging in noncommittal affairs with casual pick-ups; or, if he did enter into a more sustained relationship, by maintaining an amiable but unflappable aloofness. As he explained to one female hopeful, sex and love "were two very different things" for him (so much so that the daughter he sired by an early mistress didn't meet her father until she was in her 50s). When he married at the age of 40—a surprise to his lovers and friends, none of whom had ever met the bride—it was apparently for the woman's money; Duchamp divorced her after seven months.

If Duchamp had any real personal attachment, at least up until the time of his remarriage to Alexina ("Teeny") Matisse three decades later, it was mainly to his siblings, particularly his sister Suzanne and his two idolized older brothers, the sculptor Raymond Duchamp-Villon and the commercial artist Jacques Villon. (The fanciful surnames were the brothers' own inventions.) From his brothers, the young Duchamp received his artistic apprenticeship, as well as the lifelong passion for chess that would become one of his best-known traits.

Art, in fact, was something of a family affair for the Duchamps: Suzanne would also become a painter, and Marcel's mother, Lucie, a "placid and indifferent" woman who was at least partly responsible for her son's impassive nature, had early on nurtured artistic ambitions, though without her children's talent. Even his father, Eugène, whose notarial practice ensured the family's comfortable existence, joined in by financially supporting his offspring's unorthodox career choices—at least in part, as Tomkins suggests, because he enjoyed the contact it afforded him with bohemian life.

From the first, Duchamp demonstrated not so much a native brilliance—his early paintings are unremarkable glosses on Cubist and Fauvist tendencies, and he was never a world-class chess player—as a strong sense of determination and an uncommon ability to move toward what he wanted. The young painter spent his early years attending artists' discussions with his two brothers, during which he would sit silent and awestruck, but he soon became bored with the self-serious theorizing of the Parisian avant-garde. At the age of 25, he composed his breakthrough canvas, the seminal *Nude Descending a Staircase*, and went to live in virtual isolation in Munich, where he made the first sketches of what would be his masterpiece, the mechanistic coitus-interruptus-on-glass called *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even.*

Despite these new developments in his work, Duchamp decided that same year to turn his back on painting, claiming to be "bored with it." As Tomkins points out, it wasn't that Duchamp had failed as a painter: *Nude Descending a Staircase*, the *succès de scandale* of the famous New York Armory Show (where it outshone entries by Matisse, Derain, Picasso, Dufy and Léger), is considered by many an essential work of Cubism, and his final canvas, *Tu m'* (1918), is hardly short on painterly inventiveness. (The title of the work, which was commissioned by Duchamp's devoted but intrusive patron Katherine Dreier, is generally held to be a contraction of *Tu m'emmerdes*, or "you're a pain in the ass": as succinct a comment as any on Duchamp's interpersonal relations.) It was rather that painting, no matter how innovative, still belonged to what Duchamp dismissively termed "retinal," or purely visual, art. He wanted to engage the viewer's thinking and not just his seeing.

His aim, he said, was to "grasp things with the mind the way the penis is grasped by the vagina." In the years that followed, Duchamp's way of eliciting that grasp would extend from curious assemblages—such as *Why Not Sneeze Rose Sélavy?* (1921), a birdcage filled with marble cubes cut to look like sugar and therefore much heavier to lift than expected—to complex linguistic puns, signed by his alter ego, Rrose Sélavy, that called to mind his great literary admirations Raymond Roussel and Jean-Pierre Brisset (the latter is never mentioned by Tomkins).

In 1915, Duchamp moved to New York, where he frequented such figures as Francis Picabia and Man Ray in a kind of Dada brotherhood before the fact, and where his wit and seductive manner

Shuttle for Less

Tired of paying $176 each way for shuttling between Washington, D.C., Boston, and New York? For a limited time only, THE NEW REPUBLIC offers you 20% off the usual USAir shuttle fare of $176. Just send along your payment of $140 for each leg (*no limit*) plus $3.00 for priority mail delivery. We'll send your tickets as soon as we receive your order. Happy flying!

THE NEW REPUBLIC
SHUTTLE OFFER

Yes, I would like to take advantage of your 20% discount shuttle offer. Please send me ___ ticket(s) good for passage one way between Washington, D.C., Boston, and/or New York within the next year. My payment of $____ for ___ one way tickets, and $3.00 for priority mail postage is enclosed.

Mastercard, Visa, American Express #_____
Expiration Date_____ Signature_____

Name_____
Address_____
City, State, Zip_____
Daytime phone _____

Send this form along with your payment to:

THE NEW REPUBLIC Shuttle Offer, 1220 19th Street NW, Washington, DC 20036
For even faster service, fax: (202) 223-0566

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

made him the centerpiece of Walter and Louise Arensberg's star-studded salon. From this point on, New York would be his preferred base, a necessary and welcome counter to the cloying art milieus of "devouring" Paris; he became a permanent resident in 1942.

It was in New York that Duchamp developed what he later called "the most important single idea to come out of my work." This was the readymade. These were everyday manufactured objects—a wine rack, a snow shovel—displayed as is, with at most the addition of an enigmatic title and the artist's signature. Defending his readymade *Fountain*, a porcelain urinal signed "R. Mutt" that he vainly tried to enter in an art exhibit, he remarked: "Whether Mr. Mutt [Duchamp] with his own hands made the fountain or not has no importance. He CHOSE it. He took an ordinary article of life, placed it so that its useful significance disappeared under the new title and point of view—created a new thought for that object." In other words, the act of selecting one commonplace object over another was as significant an artistic act as laboring over which colors to apply to a canvas.

This is Duchamp's artistic philosophy pared down to the bone: provoke a mental response in the viewer simply by virtue of labeling an object "art," while offering "no beauty, no ugliness, nothing particularly aesthetic." The irony, as Tomkins points out, is that when the original readymades were reproduced decades later—with all the care normally lavished on an ancient masterpiece—they inevitably took on a more traditional artistic guise, as pieces of sculpture imitating manufactured objects.

Duchamp's brief return to Paris in 1920 found him playing a marginal role in the Dada movement proper and making the acquaintance of Breton (who, incidentally, despite his decades-long friendship with Duchamp, gets remarkably short shrift in this biography, while Surrealism, in which Duchamp was at least a friendly fellow traveler, is brushed aside with a few easy digs). On the surface of it, Dada, with its fierce anti-art stance, should have provided a perfect medium for Duchamp's rejection of the "religion of art." It was Dada that enacted the most sustained attack on even avant-garde culture, hectoring its audiences with nonsensical and aggressive barrages of words; and it was around the time of his association with the movement that Duchamp created his most resounding snub of the artistic canon, the bearded Mona Lisa called *L.H.O.O.Q.* (a French phonetic pun meaning "she's got a hot ass").

Still, Dada's engagement with the public was the sort of thing that could only leave Duchamp cold, and his standing in the movement, as with any other that sought his patronage, remained that of an "absent prince, admirable and beyond reproach," rather than a participant. Moreover, Tristan Tzara, Dada's leader, soon began alienating even his boosters with his taste for notoriety, and when Duchamp (having returned to New York) was asked to contribute to a Dada exhibit, he responded with a simple telegram: "nuts to you."

At around this time, Duchamp decided to leave art behind altogether—or at least so he claimed. "He had wanted to put painting at the service of the mind, and now, for reasons that were not clear to him or to anyone else, his mind had run out of ideas," Tomkins writes. In its place, he spent countless hours mastering the game of chess, telling one friend that "the only thing which could interest me now is a potion that would make me play chess *divinely*." The following year, in a final flourish of disengagement, he decided to leave *The Bride Stripped Bare*, to which he had devoted eight years of work, "definitively unfinished." Despite all this, of course, the ideas did return and Duchamp did continue to make art, in his way and at his leisure. It was mainly the status of "practicing artist" that he refused, preferring to think of himself simply as "a breather."

Over the next two decades, Duchamp shuttled between New York and Paris, perfecting his chess game, receiving help from various patrons (to one friend he quipped that he had "developed parasitism to a fine art") and, as ever, staying clear of passionate attachments. His longest and most serious relationship of this period, with the American Mary Reynolds, ended after the Germans entered France in 1940. Reynolds stayed behind in Paris and joined the Resistance. Duchamp, as uncommitted to politics as to anything else, procured an exit visa and sailed back to New York.

He spent the war and the years following in the now-familiar American metropolis, living, as before, in an austere single room, furnished with just a chair, a packing crate, a rudimentary bed and the indispensable chess board. His projects of the time, mainly small, included helping Peggy Guggenheim build her "Art of This Century" collection, co-editing the Surrealist magazine *VVV* with Breton, trying unsuccessfully to mass-market a miniature chess set of his own invention, and producing a portrait of George Washington in gauze and red ink for *Vogue*, which the editors rejected when they decided that it looked too much like a used sanitary napkin. Unbeknown to practically everyone, however, he had also embarked on a work that would occupy him for the next two decades, the shocking multimedia construction *Etant donnés*, which today forms one of the cornerstones of the Philadelphia Museum of Art's permanent collection.

It wasn't until the 1960s that Duchamp started to be recognized as more than a clever but obscure prankster, when a new generation of artists adopted him as the father of many of the decade's movements, from Fluxus to Pop. When he died in 1968, the event was front-page news throughout the world, though at Duchamp's insistence there was no funeral service. His epitaph, which he had written, might have been the title of one of his readymades: "Besides, it is always the others who die."

Calvin Tomkins organizes the facts of Duchamp's life and work into a sober, coherent whole, and for this alone his book makes valuable reading for anyone seeking to understand how art's cutting edge was honed. In addition, his presentations of the social and artistic contexts in which the artist moved are generally sound. He allows much of his subject's humor and charm to shine through, giving us at least a bird's-eye view of what made the man so attractive to so many. And if his prose contains some unfortunate tics (such as a tendency to repeat information needlessly), it is for the most part smooth enough to carry the reader easily through.

The problems arise when Tomkins addresses Duchamp the man. Particularly in the first half of the book, discussions of the life are buried under extended presentations of Duchamp's literary interests or his early paintings, without any real attempt to show how these interests influenced him, how these particular paintings were biographically significant. And far more frustrating is Tomkins's reluctance to peer behind the imperturbable mask that Duchamp took such pains to maintain. Why he should maintain it at all is only one of the central questions that the biographer leaves unanswered.

It is true that Duchamp has probably inspired more absurdities about the "hidden message" of his work than practically any other modern artist, and Tomkins plainly intends not to be taken in by them. Instead, he spends much of his biography zealously debunking the overly earnest insights of others, offering as proof the artist's own dismissals of these insights and snickering along with him at

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the hapless commentators who have read too much into mere play. But by basing his refutations on Duchamp's remarks, he often falls into the equally perilous trap of taking the man too much at his word, missing many occasions when that word seems to cry out for interpretation.

A case in point is the much-debated question of whether or not Duchamp harbored an incestuous attraction to his sister Suzanne. Some (notably the Italian critic and gallery owner Arturo Schwarz) have seen evidence of this attraction not only in Duchamp's coldness toward the women in his life, but also in such works as *Unhappy Readymade*, a wedding gift for Suzanne that instructed the couple to hang a geometry text outside their window until the elements destroyed it. Duchamp himself laughed off interpretations such as Schwarz's, calling *Unhappy Readymade* merely "an amusing idea," and Tomkins seems content to follow him without further comment. The result is that his own refutations of these theories are no more convincing than the theories themselves. It is as if Tomkins, so quick to brand others' interpretations "outlandish," is himself afraid of advancing any view that might be so branded in turn, or with which Duchamp might have taken issue.

This unwillingness to distance himself from Duchamp's perspective makes for a literal-mindedness that more than once plays Tomkins false. Discussing Duchamp's forays into art dealing, for example, he appears genuinely at a loss to reconcile his "often-expressed scorn for the commercialization of art" with the fact that he "earned his living mainly by buying and selling the work of other artists." Whereas it seems clear (to my mind, at least) that Duchamp, one of the least sentimental people who ever lived, felt just as much disdain for art's spiritual "mission" as he did for its reduction to a commodity. Refusing to be trapped by either attitude, he had no qualms whatsoever—as his correspondence amply attests—about trying to profit from his or anyone else's creations.

In the end, of course, Duchamp's imperviousness to fixed meanings is what keeps his work mysteriously fascinating, and Tomkins is no doubt true to the spirit of it in not seeking to delve too deeply into the man's motivations. Still, his biography puts me in mind of one of Duchamp's early notes, concerning "the question of shop windows": "When one undergoes the examination of the shop window, one also pronounces one's own sentence," he wrote. "The penalty consists in cutting the pane and in kicking oneself as soon as possession is consummated." For Duchamp, as for much of his art, the issue was one of perpetual dissatisfaction and renunciation. One gazes forever at the enticing object, separated from it by an invisible but impenetrable pane, caught between unrequited desire and the inevitable disappointment that would accompany its gratification. Tomkins polishes that shop window, letting light into some formerly dark corners, but he does not try to cut through to the other side. His Duchamp remains a rather "retinal" figure: on full display, and as unapproachable as ever. Like the man outside the window, we are allowed to see but not to touch.

MARK POLIZZOTTI's biography of André Breton, *Revolution of the Mind*, will be reissued in paperback this spring by Da Capo Press.

Deng and Gone

BY ANDREW J. NATHAN

Troublemaker: One Man's Crusade Against China's Cruelty by Harry Wu with George Vecsey

(Times Books, 328 pp., $25)

The Deng Xiaoping Era: An Inquiry Into the Fate of Chinese Socialism, 1978-1994 by Maurice Meisner

(Hill and Wang, 544 pp., $30)

Harry Wu is a former prisoner of the Chinese gulag who, since his arrival in the United States in 1985, has become the troublemaker that he prides himself on being. In 1991, he cooperated with CBS News to produce a report on labor camp exports for "60 Minutes." The following year he published a book on the Chinese work camp system, called *Laogai: The Chinese Gulag*. He also established the Laogai Research Foundation to promote attention to the abuse of prisoners in China and the export of Chinese labor-camp products to the United States. This was followed by an autobiography, *Bitter Winds: A Memoir of My Years in China's Gulag*, published in 1994, and then another trip to China, to record video exposing the practice of executing condemned prisoners on demand to harvest their organs for transplant to paying customers.

Not surprisingly, Wu became one of Beijing's most potent political enemies. His new book recaps the earlier episodes and picks up the story with his 1995 attempt to re-enter China. This time he sought fresh information on political prisoners, forced labor, labor-camp exports, prisoner executions, organ transplants and, especially, proof of what he suspected was World Bank assistance to the development of labor camps in the northwest. Wu made international headlines when he was caught at the border by that characteristic device of Deng Xiaoping's modernization, a computer. He was transferred to the central Chinese city of Wuhan for a detention that lasted a little over two months, and eventually released as part of a deal between the United States and China that allowed Hillary Rodham Clinton to attend the Beijing Women's Conference—another instance in a long list of events showing that China makes concessions when foreign pressure is more than a bluff.

Assisted by the sports reporter George Vecsey, Wu tells the story of his detention and release in a Sam Spade style that is quite different from the sensitive, introspective voice of *Bitter Winds*, co-authored with Carolyn Wakeman. He admits he is a "bone in the throat," obsessed and "crazy." "I have a temper and a strong will and the need to be the boss," he says. He portrays himself as compulsively ruthless in his mission. The tough-guy diction is authentic. Just before his trip in 1995, I urged him not to take the risk. He told me bluntly that he didn't care what happened, as long as he

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

was helping Chinese prisoners.

Being arrested in a police state is inevitably unnerving; but Wu learned that his case was receiving high-level attention when an official from the American Embassy in Beijing traveled to Wuhan to visit him. The police general who was assigned to draw him out treated him so carefully that it was apparent his arrest was more of a problem than a triumph for the Chinese government. "You are lucky you are an American," General Wang told Wu. "We treat you like the special of the specials." In Wu's case, it was the interrogators who were figuratively wearing handcuffs, leaving Wu straining to create an air of threat with remarks such as, "In earlier interrogations, I had seen worse." Nor does the book sustain suspense over Wu's trial and punishment. Not only do we already know from the newspapers how it came out, but Wu's narrative establishes that a U.S.-China deal was soon cooked.

Wu admitted to his interrogators that he committed illegal acts and moral shortcuts during his undercover trips to China. He used fake business cards, traveled with false credentials, posed as a police officer, entered restricted premises without permission, stole documents and told innumerable lies. But he defends these acts as justified by the nature of the regime. He reports General Wang as saying, "You lie a lot."

> I thought to myself, "No, you people lied to me. I learned to lie to survive. I've heard big lies and small lies. I remember the lie in 1957—from your Chairman Mao. 'Let a hundred flowers bloom.' When I tried to bloom, however, I was labeled a counter-revolutionary." Instead, I said: "What about the biggest lie of all? Communism—it cost me nineteen years of my life."
>
> It is hard for me to explain this to Westerners, but the Chinese totally accept that they will lie when it is to their advantage.

On the basis of many of these acts, Wu was convicted of stealing state secrets and expelled. Was he a human rights victim? Some of the acts that he committed would be crimes anywhere, though minor ones. Others are crimes under Chinese law only because China is a police state that tries to obscure its violations of human rights with an overly broad State Secrets Law. Procedurally, his treatment was slightly irregular under Chinese law, but his trial was expeditious. He was not mistreated, he was afforded late but adequate access to an American consul, and he received a Chinese-style, pro-forma legal defense. He was sentenced to fifteen years, then expelled without serving time.

Wu's own victimization, in short, does not make much of a case against the Chinese government. But his accounts of larger human rights issues are in some instances more convincing. Wu clarifies the legal and moral issues involved in the import into the United States of Chinese forced-labor products. There is nothing wrong with giving prisoners work to do, but prison labor, which is involuntary, violates human rights standards, even more so when convictions are unjust, labor conditions are slave-like, and the system encourages camp administrators to value profit above inmate welfare. American law is clear in banning imports of forced-labor products. The Chinese government has signed and then violated a memorandum of understanding promising to comply.

Wu's charges against the World Bank are more difficult to pin down. China has prison camps in the vast northwestern province of Xinjiang, and the World Bank aids irrigation projects there. Is there an improper relationship between the two? Wu makes a good case that the same Chinese agency supervises both the projects and the camps. He has charged, in press releases of the Laogai Research Foundation and in testimony before Congress, that forced labor is used in the projects and irrigation water reaches the camps. Since his trip to investigate the situation was aborted by his arrest, the details are unclear. And the bank's denials are also fuzzy. It seems unsure about the bureaucratic relationships between its Chinese partner agency and the military and camp systems, and unable to find out much about what goes on in the province that the Chinese government does not want it to know.

Having been burned by criticisms of loose counting, Wu is more cautious than in his earlier writings about the size of the Chinese prison population and the proportion of political prisoners. He now estimates there are 6 to 8 million prisoners, of whom 10 percent are political victims. Many experts consider these numbers on the high side, but nobody has solid data. The Chinese government denies credible information to the outside world.

On prison conditions and camp conditions, Wu's arrest prevented him from gathering up-to-date material. His narrative's adventure-story ambience leaves the impression that he thinks nothing has changed since the Mao years. Transported in an air-conditioned Jeep, he recalls being herded into a railroad car and transported through the night as a prisoner. Confined in a hostel with plumbing, given decent food and interrogated without torture, he remembers the horrors of the camps. The effect of overlapping his past experiences with his present ones is to obscure the differences between the gulag in Mao's time and whatever may be going on there today. We know that Wei Jingsheng and other political prisoners are intentionally mistreated, and that their health invariably deteriorates in prison. There is reason to be skeptical of government propaganda about idyllic camps and repentant prisoners. And yet conditions in the system have probably improved to some extent. Again, it is the Chinese government that is responsible for the fact that we don't know.

Wu seems embarrassed by the fact that many things in Deng's China are better than they were in Mao's time. "China was changing. Even I had to admit that," he says, and then adds, "not necessarily for the better." Living standards are rising, personal freedom has increased, the scope of permitted discussion has widened, the regime creates fewer political victims than in the Mao years and treats them, if still badly, less harshly than in the past. Yet the regime remains a major human rights violator. Political rights are pervasively denied, the dissident movement has been crushed, and repression has intensified in Tibet and other minority areas.

The human rights movement has always derived its moral force from the idea that rights are rights, and that their deprivation in every instance is intolerable. The proper measurement of these abuses is not merely quantitative. China does not have to be worse than ever, or worse than Burma or North Korea, to be condemned for the human rights violations that it frequently commits.

A similar problem of how to combine the acknowledgement of progress with the criticism of tyranny underlies the argument in Maurice Meisner's history of Deng Xiaoping's China. Meisner is a professor of history at the University of Wisconsin. Besides writing on early Chinese Marxism, he has published two previous books on the history of communist China, *Mao's China* (1977) and *Mao's China and After* (1986, a revised and expanded version of the first book). He is well equipped to evaluate Deng's reforms in building "socialism with Chinese characteristics." But in lieu of the conventional triumphalist narrative of China's adoption of capitalism, Meisner offers something rather surprising—an elegy to the abandonment of socialism.

The shift in viewpoint yields an important idea, but to get there Meisner

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

traverses two stretches of treacherous terrain. The first involves praising Mao as a socialist in order to condemn Deng as an apostate. What, after all, is socialism, if not what Deng Xiaoping said it is—raising living standards while maintaining Communist Party rule and state dominance over the industrial sector? Thus, a Chinese friend who recently returned to China after a visit to the United States wrote to me in praise of Las Vegas as a model for Chinese socialism. As he put it, the city "took advantage of special policies granted by the higher level of government to build a special economic zone, and found a way to develop rapidly and raise people from poverty. Food and lodging are cheap, social order is good, and the hotels have free shows. It is a model for constructing socialist spiritual civilization."

Why shouldn't the Chinese see Las Vegas as a model for socialism, if Americans see the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone as a center of capitalism? Meisner says that socialism means workers' control over "the conditions and products of their labor." Both a Dengist and a bourgeois liberal might ask how worker control can be exercised, if not by state control of industry, which Meisner rejects. Through representative institutions, since Meisner is sympathetic to the democratic dissidents? But how would that be a distinctively socialist criticism of Dengism, since it is the same criticism offered by bourgeois liberals? Meisner seems to have in mind some form of direct worker participation in factory management.

Whatever socialism might be, it was not practiced in the Mao years. Mao's revolution engendered the biggest bureaucracy in the history of China—in the history of the world—as well as the biggest famine (a story recently told by Jasper Becker in *Hungry Ghosts: Mao's Secret Famine*), one of the longest reigns of terror in the Cultural Revolution, and one of the most extreme cults of personality. To be sure, under Mao's leadership China survived in a hostile international environment, fed itself, increased literacy and life expectancy and became a modern if second-rate industrial and military power. Following the economist Carl Riskin, Meisner points out that without Maoism's economic achievements, Deng would have had little to reform. Still, he accepts the standard analyses of Maoism's economic flaws. State planning produced waste and inefficiency, mobilizational management lost its initial ability to motivate workers, technology lagged and productivity declined, leaving Mao's successors no choice but to attempt reform.

But Meisner commends Mao for his ideals. To find the socialist essence in Mao's thought, Meisner turns several times to a work that Mao never published, "Reading Notes on the Soviet Text *Political Economy*," which dates from the radical Great Leap Forward period of the late 1950s. From this critique of late Stalinism, Meisner extracts references to mobilizing the masses, narrowing the gap between city and countryside, and overriding conservative bureaucrats. He overlooks passages in the same document—and in Mao's published works—in favor of forced-march economic policies, political violence and ideological intolerance. Indeed, Meisner's view of Mao is more favorable in this book than in his books on the Mao era itself. It is as if the rise of Deng has cast Mao in a better light.

Only such selectivity enables Meisner to give Mao mixed marks. On the one hand, "life on the communes bore little resemblance to these democratic and socialist ideas"; and on the other, "the communes did stand as symbolic reminders of Maoist socialist goals." In the cities, "workers in Chinese factories had no more to say about the conditions under which they labored than their counterparts in capitalist countries"; but at least Maoist industry was not privately owned and the state remained committed to full employment and job security. In the Cultural Revolution, "the wreckage of the movement left millions of physically and psychologically wounded victims"; but still, "rarely has there been so searching an inquiry into the sources of inequality, elitism, hierarchy, and bureaucracy."

It is perhaps a fair question whether Mao was morally less culpable than Hitler or Stalin, since his purposes were more lofty. I agree with Daniel Chirot in *Modern Tyrants* that the answer is no, because the excuse does not justify the crime. In any case, that is not the question asked here. Rather, Meisner compares Mao to Deng, and suggests Mao was more admirable from a socialist standpoint, because Deng's motives were more pragmatic.

Meisner does not accept at face value Deng Xiaoping's professions of socialist faith. He devotes as close attention to ideology in Deng's era as in Mao's, but it is no longer because he thinks that ideology represents ideals. Except for sympathetic passages on the pro-democracy dissidents, he examines recent ideology as a guide to the hypocrisy of the ideologues. As befits an intellectual historian, his analyses are skillful, but they are designed to show how ideology was

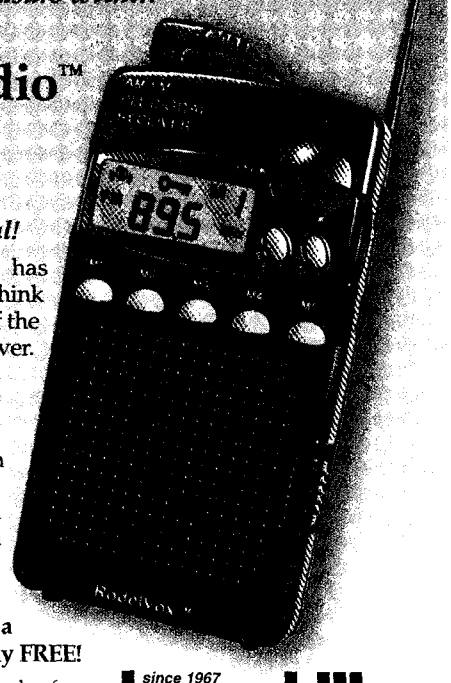
A whole new world of listening pleasure with...

MR-307A PLL Digital AM/FM Radio™ by RodelVox™ only $49.95*

But read this ad for an even better deal!

This breakthrough shirtpocket radio has sound so clean and crisp that you'd think you were in a concert hall. Here are some of the great features of this breakthrough receiver.

- PLL Synthesized Tuning
- Built-in Speaker
- High-Impact Case
- State-of-the-Art Technology
- 10 Memory Presets
- Stereo Earphones
- Stereo Phone Jack
- Stereo/Mono Switch
- Key-Lock Function
- Batteries Included
- Telescope Antenna
- Last-Tuned Station Retained



***And here is the "even better deal": Buy two *PowerVox IV*™ for $99.90 and we'll send you a third one, with our compliments—absolutely FREE!**

You may order by toll-free phone, by mail, or by fax and pay by check or Visa/MasterCard. Please give order number **#1050C569.** Add $4.95 for ship./ins. and sales tax for CA delivery. You have 30-day refund and one-year warranty. We do not refund postage.

since 1967 haverhills®

185 Berry St., San Francisco, CA 94107

Order by toll-free phone: (800) 797-7367 or by fax: (415) 546-7808

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

twisted and misused. In short, Meisner's chopsticks wander selectively over the evidence, picking up the Mao he likes and setting aside the Deng he deplores.

When he turns from ideals to accomplishments, Meisner traverses a second analytical minefield in order to make the argument that people were in some sense worse off under Deng than Mao. It is true, as Meisner says, that China under Deng was beset with problems: unemployment, migrant labor, polarization of wealth, decline of social services, land plot miniaturization, tenant farming, stagnating grain production, crime, inflation, corruption and pollution. And things may be even worse in some respects than he notes. After his book went to press, the World Bank issued a report saying that poverty is more widespread in China than previously thought, with about one-quarter of the people spending less than $1 a day.

Still, more people lived in poverty under Mao, there was worse devastation of the environment, and political oppression was harsher. If some of today's social ills were absent, it was because conditions were so bad that there was no chance for them to emerge. People were tied to their communes and enterprises, and so they could not move freely to look for work. Wealth was equitably distributed because everyone was poor.

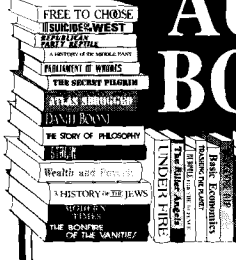
GOVERNMENT FORECLOSED HOMES FOR

pennies on $1. Delinquent Tax, Repo's, REO's. Your Area.

Call Toll Free: 1-800-898-4377
Ext. H-4377 for current listings

NEW AUTHORS
PUBLISH YOUR WORK

All subjects considered:
Fiction, Biography, Poetry, Religion, Childrens;
AUTHORS WORLDWIDE INVITED.
Write or send your manuscript to:
MINERVA PRESS
2 Old Brompton Road • London SW7 3DQ, England



AUDIO BOOKS

- *Rentals by mail*
- *All Unabridged*
- *Huge Selection*
- *100% Guarantee*

BLACKSTONE AUDIO BOOKS
Dept. NE • P.O. Box 969 • Ashland OR 97520

For a **FREE** Catalogue, Write or Call:

1-800-729-2665

The fact is that, as Meisner notes, GNP soared under Deng and living standards increased in "virtually all sectors of society and all regions of the country."

But the rise of general levels of welfare does not deflect Meisner's criticism. His concern is with the rise of wage labor, which he views as inherently exploitative. Tens of millions of Chinese peasants have moved from virtual serfdom on Mao's communes to jobs in rural factories and urban construction. Tens of millions of urbanites have moved from a form of indentured servitude in state factories to positions in private, collective or foreign-invested enterprises. On the average, these people have benefited from "greater per capita incomes and improved material conditions of life." Yet Meisner submits that they "suffer greater exploitation at the same time." And the contradiction is resolved in this way:

> [I]t is cheap labor that primarily accounts for the enormous gap between the relatively low costs of production and the relatively high value of what is produced. The width of this gap is roughly indicative of the intensity of labor exploitation that is the hallmark of China's "socialist market economy," however much this process of exploitation may benefit society at large. But to say that a worker laboring in a rural factory is economically better off than she or he would have been without that factory job does not diminish the degree of exploitation.

The measure of Deng's failure, in sum, is not that he has not made people better off, but that he has done so by providing conditions in which workers' productivity exceeds the cost of elevating their standards of living. This is, in effect, Marx's theory of surplus value with a twist. Surely Marx did not say that socialism would be any more able than capitalism to provide economic growth without surplus value. Yet this is the implication of Meisner's position in accusing Deng of abandoning socialism by allowing profits to be taken from wage labor.

Many scholars will also disagree with Meisner's statement that Deng enlarged the bureaucracy and expanded its power. Instead, they would argue that he has contracted and decentralized it, and distributed some of its power to enterprises. But Meisner is persuasive that Deng, by professionalizing the bureaucracy, did not diminish its power or increase the influence of civil society. What has happened is that a toxic combination of repression and liberalization has deterred most citizens from challenging the regime. Deng granted liberalization in order to buy off rather than empower opposition. And the bureaucracy has learned to live comfortably with the market by sponsoring it, directing it and creaming profits from it. Instead of an independent civil society, an entrepreneurial class has emerged that is part of a single power elite dominated by its bureaucratic members.

The result, according to Meisner, is bureaucratic capitalism—a system in which a dictatorial state links up with rapacious entrepreneurs to exploit workers. "Foreign observers who are so puzzled by how a dictatorial political regime can preside over a flourishing market economy misunderstand the nature of the capitalist system that Deng Xiaoping's economic reforms created in China," he argues. "It is a capitalist system ... that presupposes bureaucratic hierarchy, massive corruption, political dictatorship, ... growing inequality and competitiveness, ideological and cultural conservatism.... "

Meisner reminds us that the bourgeois revolution is as liable to result in fascism as in democracy. It depends on whether the bourgeoisie is independent of the state or dependent on it. In China's case, the bourgeoisie is not only dependent on the state, it also lacks any firm root in private property from which to grow toward an independent status in the foreseeable future. China's modernization is "perhaps a late-twentieth-century variant of what Barrington Moore termed 'conservative modernization'"—a new Bismarckian Germany or Meiji Japan.

One does not have to accept the book's theories of socialism and worker exploitation to see the force of this argument. It dovetails with scholarly analyses of the rise of "local corporatism" and the Chinese developmental state, and with news reports about corruption and the business successes of the offspring of the cadre elite. And the convergent conclusion is that the civil society that began to emerge in the 1980s has been rolled back since Tiananmen. The central and local party elites have stayed in control, combining an entrepreneurial economy with political dictatorship in a way that only the historically naïve can find incongruous. They have brought about China's strongest surge of development at the time of "harsh political and intellectual repression."

"The communist state has not become irrelevant because of the development of a capitalist economy, as is widely supposed," Meisner concludes.

> Rather, the Communist political structure is eminently functional, logically serving as the protector of the capitalist system and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the bourgeois classes it created. In China today, the coercion of the market is enforced by a repressive state apparatus, whose functions include the disciplining of the workforce and keeping social conflicts within bounds. Such is the typical role of the state in a capitalist economy. The only real incongruity is that Chinese state leaders still claim a socialist legitimacy in addition to their eminently well-deserved nationalist one.

The classification of Deng's system as bureaucratic capitalism produces an important insight into its political prospects. One of the best-established generalizations in the social sciences (and in the op-ed pages) is that economic growth leads to liberalization, and eventually to democracy. As applied to China today, however, this is an in-the-long-run-we're-all-dead argument. It took economic growth seventy or more years to work its magic in Russia, forty years in eastern Europe, thirty years in Taiwan and South Korea.

China is not eastern Europe, where governments were kept in power by a foreign army; and it is not the Soviet Union, where more than 50 percent of the population consisted of minority peoples; and it is not Taiwan, where the enterprising class consisted chiefly of members of the politically excluded ethnic Taiwanese majority; or South Korea, where intense American pressure over many years helped protect a political space for student dissidents and opposition politicians. China is more like Latin America in the era of import-substituting industrialization, when "bureaucratic authoritarianism" reigned supreme—except that China's human rights abuses are treated far more gently by Western governments.

We know why China has become the beneficiary of a business-driven double standard in the application of international human rights principles. Less widely known are the reasons why this policy is a mistake. The reasons are these: soft-pedaling China's rights violations undercuts the international human rights regime, postpones the creation of a rule of law needed by both domestic and foreign commercial interests, and leaves China vulnerable to the developmental disasters that authoritarian governments often commit.

There are grounds for hoping that Madeleine Albright will pursue a more forceful policy on human rights in China, but so far she has voiced the administration line. In her confirmation hearings, she remarked: "As we have greater trade relations and there is the creation of an economic middle class in China, that penetration and the example that we've seen in other countries ... will help the human rights situation evolve." Meisner shows why this is not so. Economic development will not do our political work for us.

This does not mean that there are no internal forces working for human rights and democracy. Contrary to the administration—and to Meisner, who says that "the challenges will come from the victims, not the beneficiaries, of state-sponsored capitalism"—progress so far has been generated by professionals and bureaucratic interest groups who want clearer rules for smoother administration. But given the bureaucratic-capitalist alliance arrayed on the other side, it will be a long time before these forces produce a fundamental change in the nature of the Chinese state. Standards of living may rise and the scope for private speech and action may expand for a long time without leading to a rule of law that allows government abuses to be challenged safely. Such rights will not come by themselves in China. Forces inside and outside China will have to bring them into being.

ANDREW J. NATHAN is co-author with Robert S. Ross of the forthcoming *The Great Wall and the Empty Fortress: China's Search for Security* (W. W. Norton).

TRB *continued from page 4*

national Trust and Investment Corporation (CITIC); Renzhong Wang, vice chairman and president of the Shanghai AJ Shareholding Corporation; James J. Sun, of the Urumqi Talhe Industry Company; and Jianiong Yu, who is with the liaison department of the CCPIT and CCOIC.

As TNR's Romesh Ratnesar was able to ascertain, four of these six men work ultimately for the Chinese government, through state-run industries. CCPIT, which Hongye Zheng headed and Jianiong Yu works for, is a state-controlled, state-funded body responsible for promoting China's trade interests. It maintains a semi-independent front, but is wholly a creature of the government. The Chinese Petro-Chemical Corporation, which Yan Sanzhong runs, is a huge conglomerate that manages China's oil fields and refineries. It has relations with many multinational companies and is currently attempting to convince foreign interests to bid on Chinese oil drilling sites. It is entirely and directly controlled by the government.

CITIC, established in the late 1970s, is the largest state-run business in China. It is a giant holding company, with offices around the world, and it is involved in a wide array of businesses, including banking, energy production and American real estate. It also controls Poly Technologies, a Chinese arms manufacturer that was caught by the FBI last year attempting to illegally sell $4 million in semiautomatic weapons in this country. The chairman of both CITIC and Poly is Wang Jun, who is the son of a Long March veteran and communist hard-liner, and who is also a previously reported visitor to the White House. CITIC is wholly controlled by the government. And of the remaining two Chinese nationals who met with the president, James J. Sun, of the Urumqi Talhe Industry Company, is at least vulnerable to the Chinese government's influence. Sun's base of operations is the Xinjiang Province, which is an autonomous zone run by a military regent appointed by Beijing.

As to the second half of the Darby-Suettinger characterizations, that these men were "major DNC contributors," it is of course possible that Darby was wrong, that these four visitors to the president's office were not DNC donors. But then, why did the president's office tell the NSC that they were? Wishful thinking?

Anyway, there remains this profoundly troubling fact. In Bill Clinton's White House, the idea that agents of the People's Republic of China were DNC donors who should be granted face time with the president was treated as very nearly business as usual.

MICHAEL KELLY

The **Progressive Populist**
Heartland news and views with **Jim Hightower, Molly Ivins, Ralph Nader, Jesse Jackson, Eugene McCarthy, Norman Solomon**, other plutocrat-pluckers and the best of the alternative press.
Free Sample **12 issues $18**
Call toll-free **1-800-205-7067**

EDITORIAL WRITER

Formulates and writes editorials for national newspaper. Requires a college degree with extensive national reporting experience; must have excellent analytical, communications, and problem-solving skills: centrist political views; the ability to write thoughtful and compelling editorials, and adapt to change productively. Strong knowledge of women's issues preferred.

Send resumé and writing samples/clips to:
USA TODAY, Human Resources-Attn: EM, 1000 Wilson Blvd., Arlington, VA 22229 or E-mail to: emcnair@usatpoa.gannett.com.

USA TODAY

An Equal Opportunity Employer
We recognize and appreciate the benefit of diversity in the workplace

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

NEW YORK DIARIST

Forget it

IS IT ALZHEIMER'S?—THE THROWaway question of every fortysomething who's forgotten a phone number—is now the big question at the Museum of Modern Art, which is presenting three dozen paintings that Willem de Kooning did between 1981 and 1987, when he was in his late 70s and early 80s. The preferred answer seems to be that, yes, de Kooning had something like Alzheimer's (which was complicated by years of alcoholism and other assorted ills), but no, it doesn't really matter, since, even as he was falling apart, his wife, Elaine, and a couple of studio assistants kept the paintings rolling off his easel. De Kooning had increasing difficulty in caring for himself, recognized people only sporadically and sometimes didn't know where he was, but, considering that he was producing more paintings in a month than he'd produced in some years, optimists might conclude that senility is a good thing. Perhaps he was out of his mind, but a lot of art-world types are getting into getting older, and they would be glad to have de Kooning as a role model. "Willem de Kooning: The Late Paintings, the 1980s" is something new—the first show dedicated to Alzheimer's chic.

THERE'S MONEY TO BE MADE, TOO, because de Kooning produced hundreds of paintings in his decline, and the better the experts say they are, the more the collectors (who directly and indirectly keep most of those experts in business) are willing to pay. An abstract painter I know put it this way: "You've seen Outsider Art, now learn about Alzheimer's Art." Of course the deficits of age are no laughing matter, but the issue here is what people are making of the paintings, not of de Kooning, who at age 92 is surely receiving the best care available to a man who can no longer look after himself.

EVERYBODY LOVES AN OPTIMISTIC diagnosis, so it's no surprise that last spring, while the show was at the Walker in Minneapolis, *The Lancet*, the British medical journal, published a feel-good article about de Kooning's late works by Carlos Hugo Espinel, a professor at the Georgetown University School of Medicine. My confidence in the author was dealt an irreparable blow when I realized that he didn't understand that de Kooning had been an abstract painter in the 1930s and '40s, well before he painted his most famous *Women*. Considering that he is unaware of the abstract paintings that are often regarded as de Kooning's greatest, Espinel is certainly in no position to evaluate the late de Koonings, which are in large measure recapitulations of his '40s work, but he goes right ahead and declares the '80s paintings "an exuberant, carefree art, full of life." "His brushstrokes are not the weaving, thinning squiggles that betray a weakening mind," suggests *The Lancet*'s correspondent. I'd recommend a second opinion.

BUT ALL THE OPINions seem pretty much to agree. Since this is a postmodern old-age style, quality is beside the point, and it doesn't matter if the paintings do or don't compose. And what's composition, anyway? How convenient. De Kooning's gift for packing a brushstroke with magical force, which for decades seldom left him even when he'd run out of ideas, had vanished for good by 1982—the only convincing painting in the show is *Pirate*, from the previous year—but that hasn't stopped critics from plowing ahead and speculating about memory and hope and other enlarging ideas. The show serves up an almost Victorian nostalgia for the values of acceptance and transcendence, but the real message is that if you keep lowering your standards the best is always yet to come.

IN THE CATALOG, ROBERT STORR, A curator at the Modern, seeks to dispel any lingering doubts about the paintings with the rather ingenious ploy of having all our doubts for us. Yes, Storr explains, the stories that studio assistants have told are by and large true. The assistants did often help de Kooning begin a painting by projecting an old drawing onto a canvas; sometimes they even traced the drawing onto the canvas and gave the white areas a coat of paint; they selected his colors; they chose different colors; and while de Kooning sat in his painting chair, they used an automatic easel to shift the paintings from vertical to horizontal, side to side, top to bottom. A French painter who had known de Kooning in the '30s and visited the studio in 1982 observed that all the old man had to do to paint a painting was hold a brush in his hand; then the assistants, by moving the easel this way and that, could paint the painting for him.

AT THE MODERN THE SHOW HAS been given a minimalist-religioso look. Most of the paintings are composed of nothing but ribbony lines, which slither through the white void without creating any feeling of pressure or contrast or expansion. The canvases have been hung very, very far apart, so that those thin streams of color seem to float in some existential Nowheresville. The labels are at the corners of the rooms, far removed from the canvases, and about a yard in front of each painting a molding is attached to the floor, so that we don't step too near. It's a hands-off, don't-look-too-close presentation. Everything is out of reach. And museumgoers seem to respond by falling into a quizzically meditative mood. They look and look, turning their heads this way and that as the decade wears on and the work descends from mechanically vapid to vapidly mechanical.

OCCASIONALLY, AN artist locks into the imagination of the sophisticated public with movie-star force. De Kooning has had that charismatic power since the '50s, when men and women began to see him as a fantasy object, as the guy to meet and then maybe beat. You could fall under the spell of his iconographic brushstrokes and then run right down to the Cedar Tavern and buy the Dutch charmer a drink. In the '50s, his burnished presence was an inspiration to all the kids who had come to New York to pick up a paintbrush and try for a career. At times, especially in the '60s, his gravitational pull forced younger artists to reject everything that he stood for, as if they couldn't realize themselves without turning their backs on him. And now, when endgames are on everybody's mind, the artist whom the poet Robert Creeley once fondly referred to as Bill the King reappears, as everybody's favorite doddering elderly relative.

GROWN CHILDREN SOMETIMES confess a certain guilty relief at the declining powers of formerly overwhelming relatives, and I wonder if some of that feeling isn't now coming into play. Having heard de Kooning praised for decades for his superior technique, the survivors may not be all that unhappy about contemplating the evisceration of his skills. The celebration of de Kooning's manhood could turn out to have been nothing compared to what we're seeing now—the mystification of his senility.

JED PERL

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

What Do Garnet Hill, Nor-Cal and Blue Marlin Have in Common?

They're all small companies making a big splash in Japan. While it may not be surprising that global giants like MacDonald's, Coke and Microsoft are major players in the Japanese market, fewer people are aware of the scores of small U.S. companies that are carving out profitable niches in Japan.

• After just two years in Japan, Garnet Hill, Inc., a New Hampshire catalog company with 99 employees, has seen sales in Japan of its natural-fiber clothing, bedding and home furnishings become the most important part of its business. The secret of Garnet Hill's success, according to owner Jim Hamblin, is "to get things right the first time." This meant hiring a Tokyo ad agency to put together ads that helped build brand name recognition, installing a toll-free fax number and a Japanese post office box address, and employing Japanese-speaking staff to handle calls.

• Nor-Cal Beverage, a California-based soft drink company, has had an unexpected success in Japan producing private label brands like "U.S. Cola" and "Savings Lemon Lime" for discount chains. "Just a few years ago, we used to visualize Japan as highly structured and rigid," says Nor-Cal COO Lynn Barkalow. "Not anymore."

• Two-year-old Blue Marlin Corp. sells 35 percent of its baseball caps and vintage-style clothes in Japan. Says Erik Stuebe, Blue Marlin president: "The Japanese appreciate our quality and design."

• Town & Country Cedar Homes, based in Petoskey, Michigan, sells 25 percent of its cedar timber homes and log cabins in Japan. "We're successul in Japan because we've developed a product that's suited to Japanese consumer tastes, we've built strong distributor relationships here, and we're making a long-term commitment to the Japanese market," explains Town & Country Cedar Homes president Stephen R. Biggs.

Not only has expanding into Japan been a good move for these companies and many more like them, but it also shows that you don't have to be a big multinational to take advantage of opportunities in today's Japanese market. Unfortunately, such positive trends are seldom reported by the media. That's a shame, because the more U.S. companies operating in Japan, the better for U.S.-Japan trade relations—today *and* tomorrow.

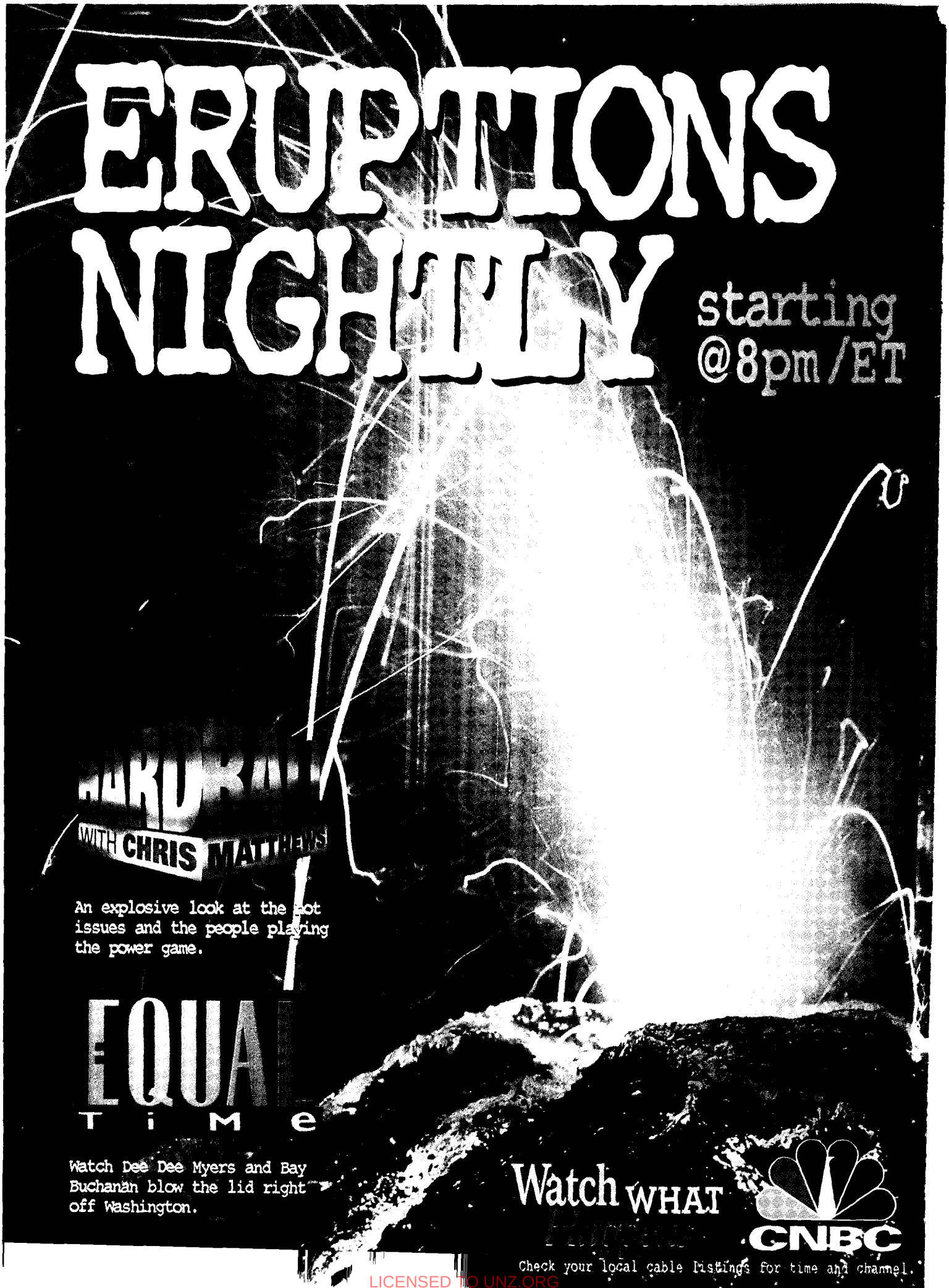
Japan Business Information Center
KEIZAI KOHO CENTER

The Japan Business Information Center is an independent, non-profit organization affiliated with the Keidanren (Japan Federation of Economic Organizations) and funded by private industry. Write us at 145 W. 57th Street, Dept. 100, New York, N.Y. 10019 (fax: 212-489-6211), or visit us at www.keidanren.or.jp.

This material is distributed by the Japan Business Information Center, which is registered with the Department of Justice, Washington, D.C., under the Foreign Agents Registration Act as an agent of the Keizai Koho Center, Tokyo, Japan. It is filed with the Department of Justice where the required registration statement is available for public inspection. Registration does not indicate approval of the contents of this material by the U.S. Government.

© 1997 Keizai Koho Center

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED